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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE WOMEN IN KAFKA'S WORKS:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

by

Helen Elizabeth Mower

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

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DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE WOMEN IN KAFKA'S WORKS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH submitted by HELEN ELIZABETH MOWER in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN GERMANIC LITERATURE.

.....

Supervisor

.....

.....

Date.....

Dedication

To my parents.

For their patience and understanding.

Abstract

This thesis examines the female characters in Kafka's novels and selected short stories, in conjunction with the women in Kafka's diaries and letters, in order to assess the validity and limitations of a biographical interpretation of Kafka's literature.

The main body of the thesis deals with the female characters in three of Kafka's short stories; Das Urteil, Die Verwandlung, and Ein Landarzt, and in his three novels; Der Verschollene, Der Prozeß, and Das Schloß. For each work relevant letters and diary entries are also taken into consideration. A conclusive case for a modified biographical approach, rather than a traditional approach, is established: namely, one which incorporates the transition of fiction into fact, rather than solely fact into fiction which, is the more commonly occurring sequence. It is also demonstrated that Kafka's works do not attempt to mirror reality, but are, instead, abstractions of reality which subsequently become universally relevant.

The sixth chapter provides an overview of Kafka's women, both factual and fictional. It shows that these women are perceived by Kafka as types rather than as individuals, and that his women, therefore, become womanhood.

The penultimate chapter deals more specifically with the biographical material: namely, the diaries and letters. It reveals the fictional aspect of the diaries, thus showing them to be an unreliable factual source for biography, and also illustrates the somewhat impersonal nature of Kafka's letters to women, which reveal little about the woman to whom they are written. This, again, recommends a

less specific approach to the correlation between Kafka's factual and fictional women.

The thesis concludes that, in reference to Kafka's works, the biographical approach must be used cautiously. The literary element of the diaries and letters must always be taken into account, as must the abstract, non-realist aspect of Kafka's works. It must also be shown how fact was absorbed into fiction, and fiction was absorbed into fact.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would never have reached completion were it not for the advice and support of a number of people. It is only right that they, too, be mentioned and that their contribution be recognised.

Firstly, I would like to express my very sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Gerwin Marahrens, for his constant support throughout. Dr. Marahrens provided invaluable advice and encouragement during the preparation of this thesis, and cannot be thanked enough. Also, my committee members, Dr. Holger Pausch and Dr. Edward Mozejko, must not go unmentioned. I am grateful to them for their comments and constructive criticism. I would also like to thank Mr. Horrocks of the University of Keele for laying the foundations of my interest in German literature, and most especially, for introducing me to Kafka. It was Mr. Horrocks who first made me aware of how little I knew, and how much more I wanted to learn. Thank you again.

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1. Introduction

As Gernot Müller observed, "Kafka-Kritik wird sich immer wieder dem Neben- und Ineinander der persönlichen und künstlerischen Problematik des Dichters stellen müssen."[1] When one surveys the abundance of Kafka criticism, one observes that most critics have elected to adopt an approach which is, at least in part, biographical. The problem, however, arises in the question of to what extent one elects to adopt this approach.

The biographical approach uses elements which are external to the work of art, and it has, therefore, been accepted that this is not necessarily the optimal method of criticism.[2] Instead, intrinsic methods, concentrating on such matters as stylistics, form, metre, metaphor and genre, have taken precedence. Nevertheless, in the realm of Kafka criticism the use of the biographical approach is still one of the most dominant methods, as is demonstrated by the works of Hayman[3], Pawel[4], Glatzer[5] and many others. Indeed, as Freedman observes, there is a current resurgence in the use of the

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[1] Gernot Müller, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Biographie am Beispiel Franz Kafkas," Studia Neophilologica, 56 (1984), p.104.

[2] see René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harvest, 1956), pp.75-80.

[3] Ronald Hayman, K.: A Biography of Kafka (London: Weidenfeld, 1981).

[4] Ernst Pawel, Das Leben Franz Kafkas (München: Hanser, 1986).

[5] Nahum Glatzer, The Loves of Franz Kafka (New York: Schocken, 1986).

biographical approach.[6] When applied in its usual form, however, the biographical approach merely seeks to find reality mirrored in literature. As Wellek and Warren point out,

> The whole view that art is self-expression pure and simple, the transcript of personal feelings and experiences, is demonstrably false. Even when there is a close relationship between the work of art and the life of an author, this must never be construed as meaning that the work of art is a mere copy of life.[7]

This does not mean, however, that this close relationship must subsequently be ignored altogether. Instead, the biographical approach should be used critically. As this thesis will demonstrate, there are times when the biographical approach can contribute to our appreciation of Kafka's works, whilst on the other hand, there are times when it will diminish it. Thus, a balance must be struck. It is with achieving this balance, that any Kafka criticism must concern itself.

The biographical approach is facilitated in many ways by the extensive documentation of Kafka's life in our possession today. For example, one can find books of photographs of Kafka's Prague[8] and detailed accounts of his conversations.[9] In addition, the many volumes of Kafka's diaries and letters are also frequently used by

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[6] Ralph Freedman, "Franz Kafka: The Revival of Biography in Modern Literature," Newsletter of the Kafka Society of America, (June: 1983), pp.22-29.

[7] Wellek and Warren p.78.

[8] Jiri Grusa, Franz Kafka aus Prag (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983).

[9] Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983).

critics as the foundation for their biographical approach to Kafka's works. These studies, however, all move in one basic direction: namely, from Kafka's life to its reflection in his literature. In this scenario the letters and diaries are regarded as representing Kafka's life, while his novels and short stories are regarded as his literature. Such an approach, therefore, demands that the letters and diaries are factual whilst the novels and short stories are fictional. This is, however, far from being the case, as this thesis will demonstrate. Not only do the diaries and letters contain many fictional elements, thus requiring that they be considered from a literary standpoint, but the novel and short stories often contain factual elements.

This factual element in no way implies, however, that Kafka's works can be considered as either realist or naturalist. Instead, Kafka's use of factual elements has a far wider sense. In his works Kafka arrived at a new and unique form of simile. He achieved what Emrich referred to as "universality."[10] By this Emrich meant that Kafka's works, although possessing personal and factual elements, do not refer to Kafka alone. Instead they refer to mankind and its new predicament at the beginning of the twentieth century, when mankind suddenly found itself in an increasingly impersonal world. Thus, for Emrich, any biographical element becomes secondary to this larger interpretation of universality.

For many critics, however, Kafka's life is an essential element in understanding his works. Most of these critics look at Kafka's

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[10] Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958).

personal conflicts and then search for their effects on his novels and short stories. The conflicts referred to most frequently are Kafka's conflict with his father and his unsuccessful relationships with women. Some critics even go so far as to combine the two. Pratt, for example, writes, "das Scheitern von Kafkas Heiratsplänen war eine unmittelbare Folge des ungesunden Verhältnisses zu seinem Vater."[11] Pratt thus employs a psychoanalytical approach which must intrinsically include extensive use of biographical detail. In his book Kafka's Doubles[12], Fickert draws extensive parallels between Kafka's life and fiction, regarding Kafka's works as reports of his life and the people in it. Others, such as Born[13], concentrate extensively on Kafka's diaries and letters in order to gain an insight into Kafka's life and, subsequently, into his literature. These critics, therefore, use the diaries and letters as a factual basis upon which to base their literary criticism, be it biographical, psychological or psychoanalytical. Perhaps the most extreme example of the use of the diaries and letter as factual documents is Hayman's book K.: A Biography of Kafka.[14] In this work, Hayman pieces together Kafka's life, frequently referring to the diaries or

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[11] Audrey E. Pratt, "Franz Kafka un sein Vater: das Verhältnis der beiden und dessen Einwirkung auf Kafkas Werk," M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1949, p.37.

[12] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern: Lang, 1979).

[13] see Jürgen Born, "Vom Urteil zum Prozeß: Zu Kafkas Leben und Schaffen in den Jahren 1912-1914," pp.186-199, and also: Jürgen Born, "'Daß zwei in mir kämpfen': Zu einem Brief Kafkas an Felice Bauer," Literatur und Kritik, 22 (1968), pp.105-109.

[14] Ronald Hayman, K.: A Biography of Kafka (London: Weidenfeld, 1981).

letters for evidence of events occurring in Kafka's life. He goes on to show how Kafka then wrote about these events in his literature. This is a classic example of a biographical approach working exclusively in one direction: from fact into fiction.

It is the goal of the thesis to examine the justification for such a strict biographical approach and to determine its validity and limitations. It will be shown that any biographical interpretation of Kafka's literature cannot work solely in one direction but rather in both, because not only did Kafka use factual elements in his fiction, but also that he sometimes projected his fiction into fact, thus reversing the process. In addition, the thesis will stress the literary rather than factual content of the diaries and letters, demonstrating that we never really get to know anyone in Kafka's life other than Kafka himself. For example, one does not become acquainted with the real Felice Bauer, but rather, with Kafka's depiction of her. As it is on such relationships as this one between Kafka and Felice, that positivist critics frequently base their literary interpretations, this thesis will concentrate on Kafka's women, both as we find them in his diaries and letters and in his novels and short stories.

The thesis will start by looking at three of Kafka's short stories, taken in chronological order, namely; Das Urteil,[15] Die Verwandlung,[16] and Ein Landarzt.[17] These three stories have been

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[15] Franz Kafka, Das Urteil in: Sämtliche Erzählungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), pp.23-32.

[16] Franz Kafka, Die Verwandlung in: Sämtliche Erzählungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), pp.56-99.

selected, as they clearly illustrate the three types of women present in Kafka's literature - the domesticating woman, the female relative and the sexual woman. In the subsequent three chapters, which deal with Kafka's three novels, one then finds a combination of these three types. In each of these four chapters the female characters will be examined in detail. Subsequently, one will look at the inspiration behind these women. Here it will be demonstrated that any inspiration found can be only of a general nature. The diaries and letters will then be examined to back up this approach, showing their literary bias and the lack of differentiation between the women in Kafka's life which renders impossible any approach which is based on identification with one specific woman.

In addition, attention to the chronological sequence of literature, diaries and letters will show that fiction frequently preempted fact. The concluding section of each chapter will then assess the limitations of the biographical approach for the work in question. Here it will be shown that women were indeed important influences on Kafka's work, but as types rather than as individuals. This is because it was types that Kafka depicted in his works and it was as types that Kafka perceived the women in his life.

Chapter six forms an overview of this perception and depiction of women. Here we will see how the women in Kafka's life, such as Felice Bauer and Milena Jesenka, served to create the atmosphere of conflict necessary for Kafka to write. The long, tempestuous

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[17] Franz Kafka, Ein Landarzt in: Sämtliche Erzählungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), pp.124-128.

relationships will be examined to reveal the extent to which women were a means to an end, the end being writing. Born notes,

> [...] nicht die eindeutig entschiedene Position, sondern dieser eigentümliche Schwebezustand der Unentschiedenheit und Unsicherheit - dem labilen Gleichgewicht des Trapezkünstlers vergleichbar - war dem Schaffen Kafkas offenbar am günstigsten.[18]

The inability to connect love and the sexual act will also be examined, both in Kafka's life and in his literary works, as he was again unable to perceive women as complex beings and regarded them instead as sexual beings and as a threat to his art.

In the penultimate chapter the validity of the use of Kafka's diaries and letters as factual documents will be discussed. Here, the fictional aspect of the diaries will be emphasised along with the unusual nature of the letters. The extent to which Kafka "created" Felice and Milena can be demonstrated extensively with the use of the letters which again show Kafka's concept of "womanhood." It will be demonstrated at length that the diaries and letters are of vital importance, but as extensions of Kafka's art rather than as factual documents.

The thesis, therefore, concludes that whilst a biographical approach towards an interpretation of Kafka's literature is justified when studying an author for whom self-analysis was so crucial, it cannot be used without restrictions. It cannot be denied that Kafka himself constantly drew attention to the link between his life and his writing. On 1st November, 1912, he wrote to Felice, "Meine

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[18] Jürgen Born, "'Daß zwei in mir kämpfen'," p.108.

Lebensweise ist nur auf das Schreiben hin eingerichtet,"[19] and to dismiss this connection would mean to dismiss a vital element of Kafka's work. However, it must be taken into consideration that the conflict which Kafka experienced between life and art became embodied in the decision he felt compelled to make between women and writing. Kafka had always known, however, that writing had to win and he subsequently predicted, and then proved, that he would never have a successful relationship. In Brief an den Vater Kafka wrote,

> In Wirklichkeit aber wurden die Heiratsversuche der großartigste und hoffnungsreichste Rettungsversuch, entsprechend großartig war denn allerdings auch das Mißlingen [...], denn in diesen Versuchen war einerseits alles versammelt, was ich an positiven Kräften zur Verfügung hatte, andererseits sammelten sich hier auch geradezu mit Wut alle negativen Kräfte [...], also die Schwäche, der Mangel an Selbstvertrauen, das Schuldbewußtsein, und zogen förmlich einen Kordon zwischen mir und der Heirat.[20]

For this reason, the individual identity of the woman with whom he was involved became irrelevant. Therefore, the letters and diaries must be used with this in mind, and women must be perceived by the critic as womanhood, both in Kafka's life and in his literature.

Secondly, it cannot be assumed that either the diaries or the letters are factual. It has already been observed that the letters were written by Kafka with little specific attention to their reader. In addition, however, they contain many other fictional elements.

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[19] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.66.

[20] Franz Kafka, Brief an den Vater in: Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande (New York: Schocken, 1953), p.208.

This is even more apparent in the diaries, which Kafka used more as a form of literary sketchbook than as a traditional diary.

Thirdly, the biographical approach must not be used in such a way as to find the factual event in the diaries and then look for its "reflection" in Kafka's literature. This would limit the relevance of Kafka's work to a restricted sphere. Instead, Kafka has moved beyond this to abstractions which become universally relevant. Emrich writes, "Der universelle Überblick wird [...] dadurch gewonnen, daß Kafka allen menschlichen Möglichkeiten schrankenlos Raum läßt."[21] Kafka creates types and not individuals. In addition, when one pays close attention to detail, one finds that frequently the converse is also true and that what Kafka wrote in his literature later became an element of his life, again disproving the traditional biographical approach.

It is the goal of this thesis, therefore, to demonstrate that a traditional biographical approach cannot be used to interpret Kafka's literature. The usual method of literary criticism employing the biographical approach is to move from factual, biographical evidence to its reflection in literature. Here, however, we see its severe limitations. In Kafka's case, we have neither a reliable factual basis nor a literature which is simply a reflection of reality. When used in reference to Kafka's works, the approach must move in both directions: perceiving traces of reality in Kafka's fiction and traces of fiction in Kafka's reality. In this way, the relevance of all of Kafka's writing is enhanced rather than diminished.

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[21] Emrich p.37.

2. The Women in Three of Kafka's Short Stories

2.1. Das Urteil

Written during the night of 22nd September to 23rd September, 1912, Das Urteil forms the first major completed work of Franz Kafka. Although Kafka had published some of his shorter works prior to this point, it is in Das Urteil that the writer Kafka seems to have reached maturity and to have developed the technique of merging the "real" and the "unreal" which was to become a characteristic of his later works. He had now established his own artistic method of portraying man's predicament, which has fascinated critics to this day.

2.1.1. The Female Characters

The most obvious focal point of Das Urteil is the father-son conflict between Georg Bendemann and his old but dominant father. Here the links between Kafka's own life and Georg's become clear, although, as will be discussed at a later stage in this chapter, many of the biographical elements of this work can only be observed in retrospect and, in fact, this work tends to be an eerily accurate prediction of Kafka's future rather than a documentation of past biographical details in fictional form.

On close examination of the text, however, one finds that the father-son conflict is not the only area investigated. Falke writes,

> Wir haben in der Geschichte Das Urteil [...] nicht nur die Darstellung eines Vater-Sohn-Konfliktes vor uns, sondern

> gleichzeitig die Darstellung einer Mutter-Sohn-Bindung, d.h. also; eine Darstellung des Ödipuskomplexes [...].[1]

The relationship between Georg and his deceased mother is obviously vital to our reception of the story and must not be overlooked. Clearly much has changed since the death of the mother, as the son has now started to take over both in the home and in the business. This has resulted in a power struggle in which the main weapon is the memory of the mother. "[Du hast] unserer Mutter Andenken geschändet [...]," [2] exclaims the father in an attack against his son. In this battle of guilty consciences it seems that whoever has the deceased mother on his side will be the winner. The father comments that "[...] der Tod unseres Mütterchens [hat mich] viel mehr niedergeschlagen als dich" in a further attempt to demoralise the son. The mother is the most powerful weapon that these two men possess and to which the father has the greatest right. When Georg carries his father into his own bed he is removing him from the marital bed, perhaps in an attempt to reduce the mother's power and increase his own. The son is removing the father from a room which "[...] mit verschiedenen Andenken an die selige Mutter ausgeschmückt war [...]" [3] into his own realm, where the mother's influence can be lessened. In this way, the mother is of vital importance to the action of the play, even though she never appears. Her presence and

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[1] Rita Falke, "Biographisch-literarische Hintergründe von Kafkas Urteil," Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift (1960:2), p.173.

[2] Franz Kafka, Das Urteil in: Sämtliche Erzählungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), p.30.

[3] Kafka, Das Urteil p.26.

influence are constantly felt and it is the mother who is the major motivating figure behind the two men.

What really brings the power struggle between the two men to a climax, however, is Georg's engagement to Frieda. This leads to a struggle not only between Georg and his father, but also with his friend in Petersburg. In Das Urteil it seems that a relationship intrinsically entails possession - or, more accurately, exclusive ownership. Each relationship excludes the possibility of a second one. "Wenn du solche Freunde hast, Georg," says Frieda, talking of the friend in Petersburg, "hättest du dich überhaupt nicht verloben sollen."[4] Thus, engagement to Frieda carries with it certain conditions and "rights of ownership." In the same conversation she makes the following comment about the friend in Petersburg:

> "Da wird er gar nicht zu unserer Hochzeit kommen," sagte sie, "und ich habe doch das Recht, alle deine Freunde kennen zu lernen." "Ich will ihn nicht stören," antwortete Georg, "verstehe mich recht, er würde wahrscheinlich kommen, wenigstens glaube ich es, aber er würde sich gezwungen und geschädigt fühlen, vielleicht mich beneiden und sicher unzufrieden und unfähig, diese Unzufriedenheit jemals zu beseitigen, allein wieder zurückfahren. Allein - weißt du was das ist?"[5]

Georg's marriage would, therefore, mean an end to his friendship with the man from Petersburg.

This concept of the exclusiveness of a relationship in Das Urteil seems to apply primarily to male/female relationships. Both Georg and the father correspond with the friend in Petersburg. Admittedly,

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[4] Kafka, Das Urteil p.25.

[5] Kafka, Das Urteil p.25.

Georg's father does this without Georg's knowledge, but once Frieda or the mother enter the relationship, the battle for ownership and possession begins. Whoever has the strongest relationship with the mother wins - just as Frieda wins rights over Georg's life. The marriage also defeats the friend and would send him back to Petersburg alone - he would have lost Georg to Frieda - or at least, this is the way Georg perceives the situation. In effect, Georg's life is governed, not by the father, as is commonly considered to be the case, but by women - namely his mother and Frieda. All conflicts come about as a result of his relationships with these two women. "Die Frau ist nicht Machtsymbol, sie ist Machthaberin"[6] writes Stach, observing that these women are not symbols of some other form of power and do not lead beyond what they are in Das Urteil. The women are, quite simply and concretely, powerful.

That the power of the woman is at least partly sexual cannot be denied. The difference between male/male and male/female relationships in this work has already been indicated, but the father makes a direct reference to the power of Frieda's sexuality.

> "Weil sie die Röcke gehoben hat," fing der Vater zu flöten an,"weil sie die Röcke so gehoben hat, die widerliche Gans [...], hast du dich an sie herangemacht, und damit du an ihr ohne Störung dich befriedigen kannst, hast du unserer Mutter Andenken geschändet, den Freund verraten und deinen Vater ins Bett gesteckt, damit er sich nicht rühren kann."[7]

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[6] Reiner Stach, Kafkas erotischer Mythos: Eine ästhetische Konstruktion des Weiblichen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), p.182.

[7] Kafka, Das Urteil p.30.

Frieda's sexual allure, therefore, has the ability to destroy any of Georg's other relationships - and it is this which makes her so powerful and sets her apart from her male counterparts.

In Das Urteil, therefore, it is women who dictate the course of action, although men are the main protagonists. The father-son conflict continuously returns to comments about the mother which shows us that Georg and his father are not just struggling for power in the home or in the business, but more accurately for power over the mother's realm - for whoever has this has the ultimate power.

Frieda, too, through use of her sexual allure, can dictate Georg's life. His marriage to her destroys his other relationships, as Georg then becomes hers and hers alone. Sex is the ultimate weapon.

2.1.2. The Inspiration Behind the Women

Not even the most ardently non-positivist critic can deny that there is a link between Das Urteil and Kafka's meeting with Felice Bauer, who was later to become his fiancée. Kafka met Felice on 13th August, 1912, just over one month before he wrote Das Urteil. His first mention of her comes in a diary entry of 20th August in which he describes her in great, if not too flattering, detail.

> Fräulein F.B. Als ich am 13. August zu Brod kam, saß sie bei Tisch und kam mir doch wie ein Dienstmädchen vor. Ich war auch gar nicht neugierig darauf, wer sie war, sondern fand mich sofort mit ihr ab. Knochiges leeres Gesicht, das seine Leere offen trug. Freier Hals. Überworfene Bluse. Sah ganz

häuslich angezogen aus, trotzdem sie es, wie sich später zeigte, gar nicht war.[8]

The very detailed description does not, however, betray Kafka's real interest in Felice, as one might perhaps at first assume. Instead, it is typical of the way in which Kafka seemed to place all of the people with whom he came into contact under a microscope and survey them with almost obsessive exactness.[9]

However, although we cannot deduce any unusual affection in the diary entry, we can draw conclusions from the dedication that Kafka added to his story Das Urteil, namely, "Für Fräulein Felice B"[10]. From a letter, dated 24th October, 1912, Kafka implies that this dedication was added at the time of writing the story, or at least very soon thereafter[11]. The intimacy of this dedication is striking, especially when one considers that at this stage Felice and Kafka had only met for a few hours, under very cool, polite circumstances, and that in his letters to her he was still addressing her as "Sehr geehrtes Fräulein!"[12] "Verehrtes Fräulein!"[13] or "Gnädiges Fräulein!"[14]. In this letter of the 24th October, Kafka also comments

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[8] Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.285.

[9] cf. diary entry for 20th February, 1911, Tagebücher p.42.

[10] Kafka, Das Urteil p.23.

[11] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.53.

[12] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.43.

[13] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.44.

[14] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.47.

that originally the dedication was to have read "Für Fräulein Felice B.. Damit sie nicht immer nur von andern Geschenke bekommt."[15] It is not certain whether or not this was the original dedication. It is possible, of course, that Kafka actually reserved this very personal comment for this letter alone, as it refers to Felice receiving gifts of chocolates from her colleagues at work and exposes Kafka's jealousy and interest in Felice. It is certain, however, that a man who laboured as much over his work as did Kafka would not simply add a dedication to what he came to regard as one of his better works, without first giving the matter deep consideration.

It is obvious that Kafka always linked Felice with Das Urteil, and this is made clear again when, four years later, Kafka decides to change the dedication. He writes,

> Nächstens erscheint Deine alte Geschichte. Ich habe die veraltete Widmung ersetzt durch: "Für F." Ist es dir Recht?[16]

Felice, therefore, is still associated with the story, but now on even more familiar terms - the story is now Felice's. Felice, then, was a major driving force for Kafka at this stage of his life. The importance of Kafka bringing Felice publically into such close contact with the most important element in his life, namely literature, cannot be underestimated. Felice strongly influenced Kafka's life and consequently his art. Jacobi goes so far as to describe Felice as the woman "[...], die während fünf Jahren sein [Kafkas]

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[15] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.53.

[16] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.704.

Dasein grundlegend bestimmte"[17]. It is perhaps ironic that it should be Felice Bauer who should have such a positive influence on Kafka's work as she was not particularly interested in it. To say that Felice was not well-read would be an unfair generalisation, but it would be true to say that Felice, like most of Kafka's contemporaries, had no idea of just how important Kafka's works were to become in the literary world. Instead she seemed to view it more as a side of him which could be detrimental to their relationship and Kafka's health (which it was), and which would wear off with time (which, of course, it did not). On this subject Pawel writes,

> Wie Kafkas Mutter gewann sie [Felice] im Lauf der Zeit die Überzeugung, daß ihr glühender Verehrer mit Hilfe einer liebenden Ehefrau, eines friedlichen Heims und einer vernünftigen Ernährung bald seine romantische Ader vergessen, sich statt dessen seinem Beruf widmen und sich nur noch zum Zeitvertreib mit dem Schreiben beschäftigen würde [...]. Solche mütterliche Lebensweisheiten waren natürlich nicht das, was Kafka suchte und brauchte.[18]

It may not have been what Kafka the bachelor needed - but it most certainly was what Kafka the writer needed, as it was this situation of conflict between two sides, the writer and the security-seeker, which caused Kafka the writer to flourish and which made him capable of writing Das Urteil overnight. Both Felice and Frieda bring promise of "harmony with the bourgeois world,"[19] but this harmony

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[17] Hansres Jacobi, "Kafkas Briefe an seine Verlobte Felice," Universitas: Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur, 23 (1968), p.297.

[18] Ernst Pawel, Das Leben Franz Kafkas (München: Hanser, 1986), p.321.

[19] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern: Lang, 1979), p.19.

cannot be acquired without sacrifices. Kafka must give up writing, which he felt would surely suffer if he were to marry Felice and enter into a state of "domestic bliss," and Georg must give up a vital part of himself and, in effect, become something he is not. This is echoed in Georg's comment, "Ich kann nicht aus mir einen Menschen herausschneiden, der vielleicht für die Freundschaft geeigneter wäre, als ich es bin."[20]

Thus we can see a link between Felice and Frieda, as Kafka, perhaps for the first time considered the implications of marriage in a hesitant light. The story's dedication indicates at what great speed his relationship with Felice was developing, bringing with it the first important romantic conflict in his life. In a conversation with Gustav Janouch, which took place at least eight years after writing Das Urteil, Kafka spoke again about the work.

> [Janouch] "Ich habe Das Urteil gelesen"
> "Hat es Ihnen gefallen?"
> "Gefallen? Das Buch ist schrecklich!"
> "Das ist richtig."
> "Ich möchte wissen, wie Sie dazu kamen. Die Widmung 'Für F.' ist sicherlich nicht nur eine Formalität. Bestimmt wollten Sie mit dem Buche jemandem etwas sagen. Ich möchte gerne den Zusammenhang kennen."
> Kafka lächelte verlegen.
> "Ich bin unverschämt. Verzeihen Sie."
> "Sie müssen sich nicht entschuldigen. Der Mensch liest, um zu fragen. Das Urteil ist das Gespenst einer Nacht."
> "Wieso?"
> "Es ist ein Gespenst," wiederholte er mit hartem Blick in die Ferne.
> "Sie haben es doch geschrieben."
> "Das ist nur die Feststellung und dadurch vollbrachte Abwehr des Gespenstes."[21]

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[20] Kafka, Das Urteil p.25.

[21] Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981), p.46.

This ghost can only be his relationship with Felice.

2.1.3. The Link Between "Das Urteil" and Kafka's Diaries and Letters

Felice threatened Kafka's literary career. Probably not intentionally, but she was a threat nonetheless. One year and one day after meeting Felice for the first time Kafka writes in his diary,

> Folgerungen aus dem Urteil für meinen Fall. Ich verdanke die Geschichte auf Umwegen ihr. Georg geht aber an der Braut zugrunde.[22]

Here Kafka is obviously comparing himself with Georg. This entry, however, is written approximately six months before his first engagement to Felice. At a time, therefore, when he probably should not have already been comparing himself with a man who commits suicide as a result of his impending marriage. It is also significant to note, in the light of the abundance of "father-son conflict" critics, that it is Frieda that Kafka sees as Georg's downfall, and not the father.

As has already been stated, the major motivation behind Das Urteil was Felice Bauer. In his first diary entry on her, Kafka writes,

> Während ich mich setzte, sah ich sie zum erstenmal genauer an, als ich saß, hatte ich schon ein unerschütterliches Urteil. Wie sich...[23]

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[22] Kafka, Tagebücher p.315.

[23] Kafka, Tagebücher p.285.

Kafka leaves this sentence unfinished but the summer, which was, as usual, unproductive for him, was now over and a new surge of literary activity was to begin where this diary left off: namely, with Das Urteil.

Kafka constantly attempted to interest Felice in his work, probably in an attempt to help her get to know him, as they had only met briefly and writing was the most important element of his life. On 30th November, 1912 Kafka sent Felice an invitation to a reading of Das Urteil[24] which was to take place on the 4th of the following month. He comments that despite the sad story he will be smiling as he equates the story with her actual presence. "Es wird mir ein sonderbares Gefühl sein, mit Deiner Geschichte, also gewissermaßen mit Dir vor einer Gesellschaft zu erscheinen"[25]. This encounter demonstrates to what extent "The relationship was in a sense more an encounter with writing than with a real woman."[26] In a more usual romance it would be unlikely that a man would give a story in which marriage is so negatively portrayed to a woman to whom he is later to become engaged. Kafka's enthusiasm seems more an enthusiasm for writing letters to her than for the actual woman herself. Koch notes,

> It is not easy to unearth in the biographical record a single hour during the very few days Kafka actually spent in company with the real woman that was not plainly unhappy.[27]

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[24] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.144.

[25] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.144.

[26] Stephen Koch, "The Secret Kafka," New Criterion (Jan:1984), p.20.

[27] Koch p.21.

As they rarely met, the only contact Kafka and Felice could rely on was letters and the occasional telephone call. Each individual, therefore, had to base his opinion of each other solely on what he read. This, obviously, did not always supply an accurate picture, and lead to disappointment on the majority of reunions. The situation, however, was perhaps not as desperate for Kafka as it was for Felice, as for Kafka writing was an essential and inspiring activity. Ironically, one month before meeting Felice, Kafka wrote to his friend Max Brod, "Wenn es wahr wäre, daß man Mädchen mit der Schrift binden kann?"[28] It is precisely this which Kafka attempts to do with Felice and which Georg tries to do with his friend, by monitoring what information he receives. Letter-writing enables him to become something he is not but it also creates a very unstable situation - a situation threatened by Felice's readiness to marry and settle down. The situation of Das Urteil, therefore, preempts what was to occur later in Kafka's own life. Kafka himself was obviously not aware of this at this stage and constantly struggled to find a sense for this story which was written in such euphoric haste. Eight months after writing the story Kafka wrote to Felice, "Das Urteil ist nicht zu erklären"[29]. With his customary enthusiasm for words, however, Kafka continued to toy with the story. After correcting galley proofs of the work Kafka entered into his diary the following analysis:

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[28] Franz Kafka, Briefe 1902-1924 (New York: Schocken, 1958), p.97.

[29] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.396.

> Georg hat so viel Buchstaben wie Franz. In Bendemann ist 'mann' nur eine für alle noch unbekannten Möglichkeiten der Geschichte vorgenommene Verstärkung von 'Bende'. Bende aber hat ebenso viele Buchstaben wie Kafka und der Vokal e wiederholt sich an den gleichen Stellen wie der Vokal a in Kafka.
>
> Frieda hat ebensoviel Buchstaben wie F. und den gleichen Anfangsbuchstaben, Brandenfeld hat den gleichen Anfangsbuchstaben wie B. und durch das 'Feld' auch in der Bedeutung eine gewisse Beziehung. Vielleicht ist sogar der Gedanke an Berlin nicht ohne Einfluß gewesen und die Erinnerung an die Mark Brandenburg hat vielleicht eingewirkt.[30]

Kafka later copied this passage in a letter to Felice[31]. It is important to note how long after the initial creative process these connections occurred to Kafka and how much later again he relayed them on to Felice. These passages do indeed seem to suggest a strong biographical link, but to what extent these passages can be used as valid evidence will be discussed in more detail in the next section. One thing is certain - they do show a strong link between the three genres of short story, diary and letter in Kafka's style. The borders between them become blurred, as indeed did the border between reality and literature in Kafka's mind. Only four months after meeting Felice, Kafka wrote to her,

> Du sagst es selbst, ich will Dich nicht quälen, Du bist zwar mein eigenes Selbst und dieses quäle ich von Zeit zu Zeit, das tut ihm gut, aber Du bist mein innerstes und zartestes Selbst und das möchte ich allerdings um alles in der Welt gern verschonen und in vollkommenster Ruhe halten. Und trotz des besten Willens - es muß die Feder sein, die in meiner Hand ihre eigenen bösen Wege geht.[32]

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[30] Kafka, Tagebücher p.297.

[31] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.394.

[32] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.154.

Already in this quotation we can see how Kafka did not depict Felice in his work, but that it was Felice who merged and became part of the work until the two were, at least for Kafka, inseparable.

2.1.4. The Extent of the Justification for the Biographical Approach

At first, much of Das Urteil seems to make little sense, indeed this is much of the appeal of Kafka's work. However, once one is aware of more of the biographical details of Kafka's life, much more seems to fall into place. The following passage, for example, gains new meaning,

> [Vater]"Hast du wirklich diesen Freund in Petersburg?"
> Georg stand verlegen auf. "Lassen wir meine Freunde sein.
> Tausend Freunde ersetzen nicht meinen Vater"[33]

Here, critics frequently refer, probably quite rightly, to Kafka's now famous relationship with his father. I say "quite rightly," because at the time Kafka wrote Das Urteil he was already twenty-nine and the conflict between himself and his father, a robust man, who devoted himself to his business, had no doubt already arisen. Here, then, a biographical approach seems appropriate. One can look at Kafka's diaries and letters and detect a tension within the family before he wrote Das Urteil. It is important, however, that we do not judge the entire work as being autobiographical on the basis of this one element. The following passage gives an example of the dangerous implications that such a reading would have. The example deals with the friend in Petersburg.

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[33] Kafka, Das Urteil p.28.

> Wie er [der Freund] erzählte, hatte er keine rechte Verbindung mit der dortigen Kolonie seiner Landleute, aber auch fast keinen gesellschaftlichen Verkehr mit einheimischen Familien und richtete sich so für ein endgültiges Junggesellentum ein.[34]

It is acceptable here, to consider that Kafka, having had no serious relationships up until this point, was giving serious consideration to bachelorhood. This, however, cannot and must not be viewed in relation to Felice. When one knows what was to happen between Kafka and Felice, their engagements and their long and troubled correspondence, then it is all too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Kafka, too, already knew, and that it was about this relationship that he wrote. Kafka could not be writing about this relationship, however, as it had not yet happened. Obviously, Kafka had concerns about marriage - but at this stage they were not concerns about marriage to Felice specifically but rather about marriage in general. It must also be taken into consideration that Kafka's sister Valli became engaged on the Saturday before Das Urteil was written, and that this too, probably lead Kafka to consider the implications of marriage.

It seems, however, that the tendency to make Kafka's literature more concrete and to try and pin him down, was already prevalent in Kafka's own circle of friends. On 12th February, 1913, Kafka made the following entry into his diary,

> Nachdem ich die Geschichte gestern bei Weltsch vorgelesen hatte, ging der alte Weltsch hinaus und lobte, als er nach einem Weilchen zurückkam, besonders die bildliche Darstellung in der Geschichte. Mit ausgestreckter Hand sagte er:"Ich

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[34] Kafka, Das Urteil p.23.

> sehe diesen Vater vor mir," und dabei sah er ausschließlich auf den leeren Sessel, in dem er während der Vorlesung gesessen war.
>
> Die Schwester sagte: "Es ist unsere Wohnung." Ich staunte darüber, wie sie die Örtlichkeit mißverstand und sagte: "Da müßte ja der Vater auf dem Klosett wohnen."[35]

Thus we can see that this story creates a definite tendency within its audience to attempt to understand it by simplifying it: namely by being able to say "this apartment = this apartment, the friend in Petersburg = Kafka the artist, Frieda = Felice," and so on. In doing this, we do the story a great disservice as we are limiting its meaning to specifics and denying it a greater relevance as a work of art. In Das Urteil Kafka did not simply write about specific lives or conflicts of his own, but rather, he wrote about life and conflict in general. Obviously, this does not exclude its relevance to his own situation, for as Freedman points out, "[...] no human author can imagine what he or she has never known, just as no computer can produce anything without being programmed"[36]. What an artist like Kafka does, however, is take what he knows and then mould it into a work of art.

A further biographical link which is somewhat misleading can be found between Das Urteil and the diaries. In his judgement on Georg the father announces,

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[35] Kafka, Tagebücher p.297.

[36] Ralph Freedman, "Franz Kafka; The Revival of Biography in Modern Literature," Newsletter of the Kafka Society of America (June:1983), p.23.

> Ein unschuldiges Kind warst du ja eigentlich, aber noch eigentlicher warst du ein teuflischer Mensch![37]

We find an echo of this sentence in a diary entry of 23rd July, 1914; "Teuflisch in aller Unschuld."[38] He wrote this in connection with the breaking off of his first engagement to Felice. Here then, it is easy to connect Das Urteil to Felice when, in fact, the chronological order of these two statements actually suggests the reverse, namely, not that Das Urteil was connected to Felice but rather that Felice has now, two years after its inception, become connected to the story. Thus, Kafka's literature has mirrored and become integrated into his life, rather than, conversely, his life becoming integrated into his literature. In this way we can see that Frieda does not mirror Felice, but that it is Felice who comes to be like Frieda. With this in mind Pratt's conclusion becomes increasingly unlikely. She writes,

> Es ist bedeutsam, daß Kafka Das Urteil während seiner Liebesgeschichte mit F.B. schrieb. Die Verlobte in der Erzählung wird von der herrschenden Figur des Vaters übertönt. Man kann schließen, daß Kafka den Misserfolg seiner Heiratspläne ahnte, und daß er in dieser Erzählung seine Furcht in künstlerische Form äusserte [...][39]

It seems inappropriately specific to refer to the failure of Kafka's wedding plans in this context, when it cannot be shown that any such plans had been made, either officially or simply in Kafka's

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[37] Kafka, Das Urteil p.32.

[38] Kafka, Tagebücher p.408.

[39] Audrey E. Pratt, "Franz Kafka und sein Vater: das Verhältnis der beiden und dessen Einwirkung auf Kafkas Werk," M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1949, p.58.

imagination. This does not rule out the feasibility of an approach which cites Kafka's concerns over marriage - it merely broadens the question, away from Felice and any specific wedding plans, as this would seem to be a somewhat premature approach at this stage.

Kafka's relationship with Felice obviously sparked off a great conflict within him - a conflict between people and his work, but it seems unlikely that only one month after meeting Felice (and then it was only for a few hours) Kafka was already thinking of failed wedding plans. If this were the case, why would he smile at the thought of Felice[40]? As we know so much about the problematic relationship between these two people, it is all too easy to assume that it was always difficult, and use our knowledge of what was to come to colour our impressions of the earlier stages of their relationship. One month after writing Das Urteil, Kafka wrote to Felice on the subject of the connection between Felice and the work,

> Der einzige Zusammenhang besteht vielmehr nur darin, daß die kleine Geschichte versucht, von ferne Ihrer wert zu sein. Und das will auch die Widmung ausdrücken.[41]

Das Urteil was, therefore, in Kafka's own words not written about Felice but for her. As the relationship progressed, Kafka himself started to see connections between Felice and Frieda.[42] This does not mean that he had overlooked these connections previously, but instead, that at the time of writing, these connections simply did

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[40] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.144.

[41] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.53.

[42] Kafka, Tagebücher p.297.

not exist. Therefore, if we use the letters and diaries to find a biographical link between Frieda and Felice, great attention must be paid to the chronology of the documents. When this is done, then it is found that no evidence exists to show that Frieda was based on Felice. Instead, Kafka's comments show us how he came to consider Felice more and more in the light of Frieda. At the time of writing, Frieda merely portrayed the problematic issues of relationships with women - only later did these women become embodied in the person of Felice.

2.2. Die Verwandlung

Die Verwandlung was written in November 1912 and is perhaps Kafka's best-known story. The work remained unpublished until 1915 when it appeared, firstly, in October in Die weißen Blätter and then, subsequently, in book form in November of that year.

Die Verwandlung was obviously an important work for Kafka, as it grew out of the same surge of literary activity that lead to the creation of Das Urteil. After his death, a letter was found which indicated, if not very enthusiastically, that Die Verwandlung was amongst his more preferred works and that, unlike much of his other work, it should not be destroyed.

> Von allem, was ich geschrieben habe, gelten nur die Bücher: Urteil, Heizer, Verwandlung, Strafkolonie, Landarzt und die Erzählung: Hungerkünstler [...]. Wenn ich sage, daß jene fünf Bücher und die Erzählung gelten, so meine ich damit nicht, daß ich den Wunsch habe, sie mögen neu gedruckt und künftigen Zeiten überliefert werden, im Gegenteil, sollten sie ganz verlorengehen, entspricht dieses meinem eigentlichen

> Wunsch. Nur hindere ich, da sie schon einmal da sind, niemanden daran, sie zu erhalten, wenn er dazu Lust hat.[43]

Although, at first glance, this does not seem to be very high praise, it must be considered in comparison to the fate that Kafka selected for his other works - namely that they be burnt. Although the seriousness of this wish is suspect[44], it does show that Die Verwandlung is a work which stood out, even for the critical Kafka, from the main body of his work.

2.2.1. The Female Characters

In all, eight women appear or are mentioned in Die Verwandlung. They are Gregor's sister Grete, his mother, the three maids, the lady in Gregor's picture, a chambermaid, and a shop girl.

The most important of these women is obviously Grete. From the very start it is the sister alone who sides with Gregor. She cries whilst everyone else is berating Gregor for being late for work, seemingly already aware of the seriousness of the situation[45]. It is Gregor, however, who first makes us aware of her power, as it is the sister who is apparently capable of helping him.

> Wäre doch die Schwester hier gewesen! Sie war klug [...]. Und gewiß hätte der Prokurist, dieser Damenfreund, sich von

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[43] Franz Kafka, Der Prozeß (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.224/225.

[44] Kafka chose Max Brod to carry out the burning, a man who had already told Kafka that he would not carry out this wish. For further evidence on Kafka's unconvincing "will" see Kafka Der Prozeß pp.223-229.

[45] Franz Kafka, Die Verwandlung in: Sämtliche Erzählungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), p.62.

> ihr lenken lassen; sie hätte die Wohnungstür zugemacht und ihm im Vorzimmer den Schrecken ausgeredet.[46]

It is thus the fact that Grete is female that gives her this ability. She is able to use her sex persuasively to influence men. It is a subtle device which counteracts any physical superiority men might have and gives her the power to manipulate men. Grete's sphere of influence does not cease there, however. Grete also has power over her mother. This becomes increasingly evident when one considers each woman's relationship to Gregor. At first, apparently out of kindness and "Zartgefühl"[47], it is exclusively Grete who cares for Gregor. This is initially rationalised in the following way,

> Gewiß wollten auch sie [die Eltern] nicht, daß Gregor verhungere, aber vielleicht hätten sie es nicht ertragen können, von seinem Essen mehr als durch Hörensagen zu erfahren, vielleicht wollte die Schwester ihnen auch eine möglicherweise nur kleine Trauer ersparen, denn tatsächlich litten sie ja gerade genug.[48]

At first, then, it seems that Grete cares for her brother for purely altruistic reasons - she wants to help Gregor and ease the burden of her parents. Slowly, however, Grete's motivation seems to change and become increasingly selfish. Grete becomes more and more important as she starts to consider herself and be considered by others as a "Sachverständige"[49] in all matters pertaining to Gregor. This becomes especially clear when Grete and her mother remove the

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[46] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.67.

[47] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.72.

[48] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.73.

[49] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.80.

furniture from Gregor's room. In the power struggle here, Grete obviously emerges as the victor and wins influence in Gregor's room and over Gregor that parallels the mother's influence over the father in the rest of the apartment, although even here Grete's influence is increasing as she helps her mother take the father to bed[50]. By the end of the story it is Grete, now at the peak of her vitality and power, who is "aufgeblüht"[51] and is ready to marry and exert her influence over another man. Grete, then, is perhaps the most powerful and influential character in the entire work and distinguishes herself not only from the male characters but also from the other women in the work.

The mother, for example, maintains the care and love that Grete initially displays, throughout the entire work. The contrast however, is that in contrast to her energetic young daughter, she is powerless. When she pleads with the father for Gregor's life she remains, however, "in gänzlicher Vereinigung"[52] with her husband. She can plead with him but not rebel against him. By pleading with him she is already admitting his superiority. All of this disproves Stach's theory that "die Frauen [...] sind Wesen ohne Eigenschaften"[53] as the women are not only easily distinguishable from the men, but also from each other. In addition to this it is also obvious that

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[50] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.86.

[51] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.99.

[52] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.85.

[53] Reiner Stach, Kafkas erotischer Mythos: Eine ästhetische Konstruktion des Weiblichen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), p.141.

it is the women who maintain order and keep things running as smoothly as possible. Whilst the father goes out to work, the women not only work but also run the household and one senses that without the aid of his family or the maids the father would not be able to exist. The reverse, however, does not appear to be the case. It is therefore extremely ironic, that in her feminist reading of Kafka's work Beck writes "Woman is seen as an intrusion to the equilibrium; she disrupts by her very presence"[54] when in fact in Die Verwandlung the very opposite is true, as in this work women are the most powerful and unifying force.

The only women in this work that have not yet been mentioned are Gregor's two previous romantic encounters[55] and the lady in the picture[56]. In all three of these cases there is an obvious sexual element. Gregor seems to have been unsuccessful in his advances on the chambermaid and the shop girl, but he vehemently refuses to be separated from the picture. Whilst the previous two women escaped him, this unreal woman won't. So strong are his feelings towards this woman whom he has himself created by cutting her out of a magazine and placing her in a gold frame that Gregor would rather attack his own sister than lose her, "Er saß auf seinem Bild und gab es nicht her. Lieber würde er Grete ins Gesicht springen."[57] For

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[54] Evelyn T. Beck, "Kafka's Traffic in Women: Gender, Power and Sexuality," The Dove and the Mole: Kafka's Journey into Darkness and Creativity, ed. M. Lazar and R. Gottesman (Malibu: Undena, 1987), p.97.

[55] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.87.

[56] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.56.

[57] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.82.

Gregor, whilst his real sexual encounters may be unsuccessful and dissatisfying, his relationship with this woman is vital although "unreal". Fickert comments,

> In Kafka's paradoxical fashion, this woman in a fur boa simultaneously represents the sexual relationship which the artist has foresworn.[58]

For Gregor this relationship, in which he can cool his burning belly against the cold glass[59], satisfies him far more than any true sexual encounter. It is a purely aesthetic relationship.

2.2.2. The Inspiration Behind the Women

The relationship between Gregor and the picture reminds the reader very much of the relationship between Kafka and Felice. Both relationships are, in effect, relationships with imaginary people, as Kafka seemed to be more in love with the Felice to whom he wrote, than with the Felice whom he met. It seems unlikely, however, that there was any link between the picture and Felice at the time the story was written. Again, the reader makes the link because he knows about Kafka's future idiosyncratic relationship and thinks of the volumes of letters which at this time, however, had not yet been written.

Much clearer inspiration, however, can be found for other characters. The most obvious one is Ottla. Ottla was Kafka's youngest sister, and there is no doubt that she was also his favour-

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[58] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern: Lang, 1979), p.48.

[59] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.81/82.

ite. Glatzer wrote of this relationship, that, "If we can say that Kafka ever loved deeply, then that love was not a romantic one but his unreserved love for Ottla"[60]. That the two were very close is documented in copious letters, photographs and reports of frequent trips taken together, the last one being taken when Kafka was forty. Like Grete in Die Verwandlung, it was Ottla who often served as an intermediary between Kafka and the family. The most striking link of all is Gregor's wish to finance Grete's studies,

> Nur die Schwester war Gregor doch noch nahegeblieben, und es war sein geheimer Plan, sie, die zum Unterschied von Gregor Musik sehr liebte und rührend Violine zu spielen verstand, nächstes Jahr ohne Rücksicht auf die großen Kosten, die das verursachen mußte, und die man schon auf andere Weise hereinbringen würde, auf das Konservatorium zu schicken.[61]

Kafka too, aided Ottla's studies in agricultural economy, helping her select where to study and providing finances. Again, however, it is crucial to note that this came after he had written about such a situation in his fiction, thus fiction became fact, rather than being based on it from the start.

There are also similarities between Gregor's and Kafka's mothers. Both attempt to protect their sons whilst not really understanding them, and in both cases their allegiance lies ultimately with the father. The Samsa's apartment too, reminds one of the apartment in which the Kafka family lived in Prague, particularly in mood and closeness rather than in precise physical lay-out.

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[60] Nahum Glatzer, The Loves of Franz Kafka (New York: Schocken, 1986), p.xii.

[61] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.75.

The final female characters for whom we can find some hint of biographical inspiration are the chambermaid and the shop girl. Kafka's first sexual experience occurred in 1903 with a shop girl whom he frequently saw standing in the doorway of a dress-shop. The experience was not a particularly pleasant one and took place in an hotel[62]. Obviously, however, it was an event of some significance for Kafka and not one which he was likely to forget.

2.2.3. The Link Between "Die Verwandlung" and Kafka's Diaries and Letters

One link between Kafka's work and his life which must be immediately broken is that between Gregor's sister Grete and Felice's friend Grete Bloch. That the two bear the same name can only be, and is only pure coincidence, as Kafka did not become acqainted with Grete Bloch until November 1913 and Felice had only met her six months before that, so she could not have mentioned her to him. Kafka himself wrote to Grete about this coincidence on 21st April, 1914.

> Übrigens heißt die Heldin Grete und macht Ihnen wenigstens im ersten Teil keine Unehre. Später allerdings, als die Plage zu groß wird, läßt sie ab und fängt ein selbständiges Leben an, verläßt den, der sie braucht. Eine alte Geschichte übrigens, mehr als ein Jahr alt, damals wußte ich den Namen Grete noch nicht zu schätzen, lernte es erst im Laufe der Geschichte.[63]

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[62] Ronald Hayman, K: A Biography of Kafka (London: Weidenfeld, 1981), p.39.

[63] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.562. A somewhat suspect intimacy between Kafka and Grete Bloch can already be detected in the tone of this letter.

Meanwhile Kafka wrote frequently to Felice during the time he was writing his "ekelhafte Geschichte"[64]. It seems as if the unpleasantness of the story was deliberate, almost as a test of Felice and also to increase her understanding of his "darker side". He wrote about the story, "[..] ekelhaft ist sie grenzenlos und solche Dinge, siehst du, kommen aus dem gleichen Herzen, in dem du wohnst und das du als Wohnung duldest"[65].

Other than these letters to Felice about the progress of Die Verwandlung there is very little to be found in the diaries and letters which might help us understand this work more completely. There is, however, one passing comment in a letter, again to Felice, which might give us some insight into the way Kafka worked. On 24th October, 1912, Kafka wrote, apparently quite out of context,

> Und nun bin ich außerdem vor dem Haustor mit der Trage eines Fleischergesellen zusammengerannt, deren Holz ich noch jetzt über dem linken Auge spüre.[66]

There are obvious parallels between this comment in a letter and the following sentence from Die Verwandlung "[...]und dann hoch über sie hinweg ein Fleischergeselle mit der Trage auf dem Kopf in stolzer Haltung heraufstieg [...]"[67]. Are these both the same butcher's boy or are they perhaps both imaginary? Obviously, any answer cannot be

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[64] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.117.

[65] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.117.

[66] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.51.

[67] Kafka, Die Verwandlung p.98.

absolutely certain, however, if we decide that both are imaginary, or that one is factual, then this decision must go on to colour our entire approach to Kafka's method of writing and influence our conclusion as to the extent of biography in these works.

2.2.4. The Extent of the Justification for the Biographical Approach

Kafka had an incredible eye for detail. He was constantly scrutinising his environment, commenting on those things which most of us take for granted and consequently no longer notice. In the case of the butcher's boy what is important is that Kafka observed butcher's boys in detail and was aware of their presence. Thus the boy in Die Verwandlung is biographical to the extent that he is the documentation of the many real boys that were delivering meat in Prague at that time. Whether or not he is the same boy as in the letter, or whether he is the very boy that came to the Niklasstraße is irrelevant. He is obviously a character whose appearance in the work demonstrates Kafka's attention to life's details and his use of these details to enrich his works.

It seems that this is also the case with Grete. It is true that the character Grete has much in common with Ottla. This is because Kafka had observed Ottla with more attention than most brothers grant their sisters. This does not mean, however, that Grete is a portrait of Ottla. Instead, what we can conclude, is that Kafka had observed "sisterly characteristics" and used them to round out his character Grete. It is Kafka's great skill at doing this that creates the

unnerving juxtaposition of normality in the family and abnormality in Gregor.

Further evidence demonstrating that the link between Ottla and Grete is a superficial one can be found in Kafka's attitude towards his work being illustrated. Kafka was strongly against any attempt to draw Gregor. "Das Insekt selbst kann nicht gezeichnet werden,"[68] stated Kafka emphatically to his publisher. In the same letter, however, he suggests instead, a picture of the parents and the sister outside Gregor's darkened room[69]. That he trusts the artist to depict this, shows that the family is simply a generic, typical family and that Grete is just "a sister". The characters are stereotypical characters representing generalities, not particular individuals. In this way the relevance of such characters is enlarged as they become "everybody." They achieve what Emrich refers to as "Universalität."[70] The insect, on the other hand, cannot be shown because it is different for everyone.

The characters, then, do not represent Kafka's family, but are moulded on them. Kafka revealed this thin line between source and subject matter in a conversation with Janouch where he was being questioned on the autobiographical extent of the work.

> "Der Held der Erzählung heißt Samsa," sagte ich. "Das klingt wie ein Kryptogramm für Kafka. Fünf Buchstaben hier wie dort. Das S im Worte Samsa hat dieselbe Stellung wie das K im Worte Kafka. Das A -"
> Kafka unterbrach mich.

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[68] Franz Kafka, Briefe 1902-1924 (New York: Schocken, 1958), p.136.

[69] Kafka, Briefe p.136.

[70] Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958), p.21.

> "Es ist kein Kryptogramm. Samsa ist nicht restlos Kafka. Die Verwandlung ist kein Bekenntnis, obwohl es - im gewissen Sinne - eine Indiskretion ist."
> "Das weiß ich nicht."
> "Ist es vielleicht fein und diskret, wenn man über die Wanzen der eigenen Familie spricht?"[71]

Thus, although the Samsa family is not the Kafka family, in revealing the skeletons in the Samsa's cupboards Kafka has exposed those of his own family. The boundary between fact and fiction is a very fine one and at times seems to become impossible to distinguish. The distinction is, however, always there. Although one may be based upon the other, this does not mean that the two become interchangeable.

This is the case with the female figures in this work. Although the roots of these characters may be imbedded in biographical soil, the plant that is fiction has grown up beyond its roots until, like Grete, it "blossoms", this time into literature. Frau Samsa has grown out of, but become different from, Frau Kafka and so on.

In conclusion then, with this work the biographical approach, although providing important information, only gives the reader half the picture. To ignore this approach altogether, however, would again leave the reader missing an important element, which, whilst not detracting from his enjoyment of the work, might lessen his insight. To concentrate on it too heavily, however, would mean to concentrate too heavily on specifics when what Kafka is writing about is not specific at all. Die Verwandlung is not a story about one

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[71] Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981), p.46.

specific family. It is concerned with life in general. Emrich writes,

> Es kann keinem Zweifel unterliegen: es geht in allen diesen Bildern um den Ausbruch aus allen gewohnten Lebensbezirken in die Randzonen des Daseins, wo Leben und Tod sich überschneiden in einem paradoxen Zwischenzustand, in dem der Abgeschiedene noch lebt und der Lebende bereits abgeschieden ist. Denn nur in solchem Zustand ist Universalität zu gewinnen.[72]

Over-emphasis on the biographical approach in Die Verwandlung would deny this extension of Kafka's art, which is its most essential element.

2.3. Ein Landarzt

The story Ein Landarzt was written, like the vast majority of Kafka's works, during the winter and, in this case, the winter of 1916 to 1917. The story first appeared in Die neue Dichtung in 1918 and then later in 1919 as the second work in a collection of Kafka's stories. The whole collection bore the title Ein Landarzt. This short story was written, therefore, when Kafka was further into his literary career and after the first failed engagement with Felice.

2.3.1. The Female Characters

Rosa, the maid, is the most important female character to appear in Ein Landarzt, whilst the mother and sister of the patient play much more secondary roles. Even Rosa, however, plays a passive role,

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[72] Emrich p.21.

falling helpless victim to the violent sexuality which surrounds her. The only word that the "willige"[73] girl utters is "Nein!"[74] as she attempts to escape from the groom. The reader is immediately aware, however, that this attempt is futile, "'Nein' schreit Rosa und läuft im richtigen Vorgefühl der Unabwendbarkeit ihres Schicksals ins Haus."[75] Rosa's passivity is accentuated by the use of the neuter 'es' in conjunction with the feminine 'sie'. For example,

> Doch kaum war es [Rosa] bei ihm [dem Knecht], umfaßt es der Knecht und schlägt sein Gesicht an ihres. Es schreit auf und flüchtet sich zu mir [...][76]

The idea of the woman as a helpless object is clear here. Rosa cannot save herself; she can be saved only by the doctor, and he cannot defend himself against the groom. Rosa is frequently referred to as an "Opfer"[77] or "Kaufpreis"[78], a sacrifice which has to be made if the doctor is to carry out his work successfully. The reader, too, becomes caught up in this mood, as the first person narrative, and the switch soon after the beginning of the story as the urgency mounts, from the past tense to the more immediate present tense, entangles the reader in the hectic, nightmarish atmosphere of

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[73] Franz Kafka, Ein Landarzt in: Sämtliche Erzählungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), p.124.

[74] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.125.

[75] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.125.

[76] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.124/125. My emphasis.

[77] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.126 and p.128.

[78] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.125.

helplessness[79]. The reader is swept along by the story in the same way that the doctor is carried off by the horses.

An important aspect to discuss when one considers the character Rosa, is that the doctor has been virtually unaware of her existence until the appearance of the groom.

> [...]daß ich diesmal auch noch Rosa hingeben mußte, dieses schöne Mädchen, das jahrelang, von mir kaum beachtet in meinem Hause lebte - dieses Opfer ist zu groß [...].[80]

What has made him aware of her is her sexuality. Now that the openly and aggressively sexual groom has arrived, he realises not only what he has missed in the past, but also what he is giving up by going to see his patients. Thus, sexuality becomes a disturbing element - if the doctor stays to protect Rosa then he will fail as a doctor. Sex, in this work is violent and unpleasant, taking place without Rosa's consent. It is animalistic rather than cultivated. The groom bites and moves like an animal and drags sexuality down to this level with him. Kurz writes, "Ein Sexualität integrierendes, ein geistig-personales Verhältnis von Mann und Frau gibt es nirgends in Kafkas Werk."[81] For the doctor to be made aware of Rosa, the sexual element was necessary and the groom is certainly not interested in establishing a relationship. The groom is driven by his

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[79] For a more detailed study of this aspect, see: Keith Leopold, "Franz Kafka's Stories in the First Person," Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association (1959: 11), p.58.

[80] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.126.

[81] Paul K. Kurz, "Verhängte Existenz Franz Kafkas Erzählung Ein Landarzt," Über moderne Literatur: Standorte und Deutungen, ed. Paul K. Kurz, (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1967), p.187.

sexual instincts just as the doctor is carried away by the horses. In the battle between the mental and the physical, the physical wins, even though it is depicted as the vulgar force.

Rosa, then, is not an individual, but a sexual object. It is she that arouses the uncontrolled, animal nature in men and then falls prey to them. It is significant then, that when the doctor finds the wound on the boy's hip, it is described as "Rosa, in vielen Schattierungen [...]"[82]. The position of "Rosa" in this sentence, leads inevitably to a link between the wound and the maid. The wound, like the sexuality surrounding Rosa, is hideous and debilitating. The wound cannot be cured and will lead to the boy's death, just as the groom's sexual urges are destructive and harmful, this time not to himself, but to Rosa.

In this story, therefore, not only Rosa falls prey to her own sexuality, but eventually it will also lead to the men's downfall.

2.3.2. The Inspiration Behind the Women

The inspiration behind Rosa obviously does not lie in one woman alone. Instead she is inspired by the sexual aspect of women in general. This is in no way portrayed as natural, in fact, Fickert describes Ein Landarzt as having a "[...] background of pathological sexuality - rape, homosexuality, impotence, pederasty [...]"[83]. Throughout the work one finds connotations of impotency, jealousy and

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[82] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.127.

[83] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern: Lang, 1979), p.161.

violence - nowhere is this sexuality linked with love. This may well be because, as Politzer so succinctly put it,

> Die Geschlechtskrankheit, der [...] Kafka zum Opfer [fiel], war die Besessenheit, anzunehmen, daß Geschlecht eine Krankheit sei.[84]

Obviously, Politzer does not literally mean that Kafka died of a sexual disease, he died of tuberculosis of the larynx. Instead, he means that Kafka suffered mentally throughout his life from an unhealthy sexual attitude.

By the time Kafka had written this work, his first engagement had already failed. More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that Kafka had also experienced several brief affairs - mainly whilst on vacation, which allows one to speculate that on these occasions the physical aspect was more important than the emotional one. Kafka, it seems, had difficulty integrating both of these elements into his life and it is this that lies behind the sexuality of Ein Landarzt. Rosa herself is unimportant, she is merely a catalyst. Beck writes,

> Woman has no place in this struggle; she is the booty to be won. She does not exist for herself and she cannot speak in her own name.[85]

This is especially pertinent in Rosa's case. Rosa remains speechless in the same way that Kafka's sexual acquaintances remain nameless.

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[84] Heinz Politzer, ed. Das Kafka-Buch: Eine innere Biographie in Selbstzeugnissen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1975), p.111.

[85] Evelyn T. Beck, "Kafka's Traffic in Women: Gender, Power and Sexuality," The Dove and the Mole: Kafka's Journey into Darkness and Creativity, ed. M. Lazar and R. Gottesman (Malibu: Undena, 1987), p.99.

Fickert refers to the groom as being the doctor's id[86] thus demonstrating the incompatibility of the two sides of the one character. The doctor cannot reconcile his sexual urges with the demands of his profession. Up until now the doctor has suppressed his sexual side until it finally bursts out of the pigsty. In much the same way, Kafka could not reconcile marriage with his writing. Kafka wrote of "Der Coitus als Bestrafung des Glückes des Beisammenseins"[87] thus revealing his abhorrence for what would normally be seen as a natural and desired activity. As in the above quotation, the clearest examples of the inspiration behind the sexuality displayed in this work can be found in Kafka's diaries.

2.3.3. The Link Between "Ein Landarzt" and Kafka's Diaries and Letters

From as early as 1911, a conflict within Kafka over his sexual urges is evident. He writes,

> Zu einer freien Aussprache mit neuen Bekanntschaften konnte ich früher deshalb nicht kommen, weil mich unbewußt das Vorhandensein sexueller Wünsche hinderte, jetzt hindert mich ihr bewußter Mangel.[88]

Kafka's somewhat obsessive preoccupation with his body and his mind led apparently to a stage of extreme self-consciousness. Not satisfied with scrutinising others Kafka also put himself under the

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86 Fickert p.61.

87 Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.315.

88 Kafka, Tagebücher p.183.

microscope. Under such close scrutiny the sexual act became obscene. By 1913, one finds Kafka automatically linking women to sex and dirtiness. For example, "Die geplatzte Sexualität der Frauen. Ihre natürliche Unreinheit"[89]. For Kafka sex was impure, and, therefore, women were impure by implication. It seems strange, at first, that by writing works such as Ein Landarzt Kafka was attempting to "purify" the world, but this was the case. In the summer after writing Ein Landarzt Kafka wrote in his diary,

> Zeitweilige Befriedigung kann ich von Arbeiten wie Landarzt noch haben, vorausgesetzt, daß mir etwas Derartiges noch gelingt (sehr unwahrscheinlich). Glück aber nur, falls ich die Welt ins Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche heben kann.[90]

Here, it is the goal of literature that Kafka is considering, rather than sexuality specifically. Literature purifies what sexuality dirties. However, once one has been wounded by love or sexual urges, one can never be healed, just as the boy's wound is diagnosed as fatal. In a conversation with Janouch, Kafka made the following telling observation:

> Die Liebe schlägt immer Wunden, die eigentlich nie richtig heilen, da die Liebe immer in Begleitung von Schmutz erscheint [...]. Zu einer Scheidung von Liebe und Schmutz kommt es nur durch den Willen des Geliebten.[91]

With Felice this is perhaps what Kafka tried to do; keep love and dirt separate as dirt would destroy his literature. Like the doctor,

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[89] Kafka, Tagebücher p.314.

[90] Kafka, Tagebücher p.534.

[91] Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981), p.197/198.

however, he would not acknowledge that the sexual urges, like the groom and horses, were there all the time. Repressing these urges only served to deform them. Kafka's diary entry of "Die Peitschen, mit denen wir einander hauen, haben gut Knoten angesetzt in den fünf Jahren"[92] reflects this perverted sexuality. That this passage, which bears obvious echoes of Ein Landarzt, should be directed at Felice[93] indicates a link between Kafka's literature and his life.

2.3.4. The Extent of the Justification for the Biographical Approach

In Ein Landarzt we have a picture of distorted sexuality. Kafka's diaries show his conflict with his own sexuality both before and after the story was written. Rosa is the object at which this perversion is aimed in the story. That distorted sexuality was a life-long problem for Kafka means that it would be ridiculous to try and pin Rosa down to being one woman in Kafka's life. Rosa is womanhood. She is the innocent trap which constantly presents itself to men.

With the same certainty, one can say that the country doctor is not Siegfried Löwy, Kafka's uncle. That this relative of Kafka was a country doctor, may have been what gave Kafka the idea to use this profession, but this is as far as any parallel can go. If Löwy is the doctor, then the story becomes meaningless. The story becomes

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92 Kafka, Tagebücher p.534.

93 This is indicated by the mention of "five years" which was the length of their relationship at this time.

almost swamped with meaning, however, when one sees in the doctor a man such as Kafka.

Kafka saw as the reason for his downfall the conflict between women and writing. Ironically, it was these things that made him great. Women created the conflict necessary for him to produce his literature, and it is his literature that has made him immortal. When Kafka discovered that he had tuberculosis, he wrote to Brod, "[ich habe] es selbst vorausgesagt. Erinnerst Du Dich an die Blutwunde im Landarzt?"[94] Again, Kafka's fiction became fact.

It is Sokel who perhaps expresses the link between the wound and Kafka most clearly. He writes,

> Wir besitzen im Landarzt die mythische Darstellung einer Existenz. Der Landarzt ist eine Fassung des Mythos, den Kafka immer wieder schrieb. Die Nachtarbeit, das dem Innerlichen, der Erforschung der Todeswunde Gewidmete, erfordert das Aufgeben der Frau, wie Kafkas nächtliches Schreiben, das ein ähnliches Erforschen der Todeswunde war, ihm die Ehe unmöglich machte.[95]

Writing and sexuality become mutually destructive - to follow either one leaves a fatal wound. Both Rosa and the country doctor's profession are the "Nachtglocke"[96], as each one prevents the possibility of the other. Kafka, too, was caught in this trap and could hear the bells of which he wrote,

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[94] Franz Kafka, Briefe 1902-1924 (New York: Schocken, 1958), p.160.

[95] Walter H. Sokel, Franz Kafka - Tragik und Ironie: Zur Struktur seiner Kunst (München: Langen, 1964), p.261.

[96] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.128.

Einmal dem Fehlläuten der Nachtglocke gefolgt - es ist niemals gutzumachen.[97]

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[97] Kafka, Ein Landarzt p.128.

3. Der Verschollene

Der Verschollene[1] was the first novel that Kafka wrote. It took approximately one year for him to complete what we have today, with most of the work falling towards the end of this period in October and November of 1912. The novel remained incomplete, and only one part of the work was published during Kafka's lifetime. Kafka chose that this part, the first chapter of the novel, be referred to as "Der Heizer - Ein Fragment" on its publication in 1913. The remainder of the novel was not published until four years after Kafka's death.

As Kafka's first novel, the work is important not only in itself but in the insight it gives us into his two subsequent works. Der Verschollene is often referred to as the least complex of Kafka's works, and whilst this may be true to the extent that there is a clear plot, it must not be assumed that the work is simplistic or substandard as a result. A study of the women characters in this work will show that they are just as complex as those in the more highly revered Das Schloß and must form an integral part of our evaluation of Kafka's women.

3.1. The Female Characters

There are several important female characters in Der Verschollene, of which no single woman is of more importance than

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[1] Kafka referred to his novel as Der Verschollene, and it is for this reason that I shall use this title in this thesis rather than the perhaps better known title of Amerika which was suggested by Brod.

another. Therefore, due to a lack of any obvious hierarchy, they will be dealt with in the order in which they appear.

The first female figure is Johanna Brummer. It is because of Johanna that Karl Roßmann has been forced to travel to America and that the story has evolved. We learn in the very first sentence of the novel that this is "[...] weil ihn ein Dienstmädchen verführt und ein Kind von ihm bekommen hatte."[2] This servant girl is Johanna. Karl, then, is seen as the innocent victim of Johanna's seduction and, unlike in Kafka's other novels, this is a typical element of relationships in Der Verschollene. Without Karl's knowledge, Johanna also contacts his uncle in New York, and it is through her help that he is given such a promising start in his new homeland. Cook points out that

> In Amerika, Karl is innocent of design in his attitude toward the women characters; their help is voluntary and spontaneous.[3]

It is Johanna who seduces him and Johanna who decides to help him. Karl himself has very little say in the entire matter and has very little control over his own future.

Moving on to the next woman, Klara, we find an almost identical situation. Klara leads Karl to her room even though he would rather go back to his uncle[4]. We later find that had Karl returned home his uncle may not have rejected him and that he could have carried on

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[2] Kafka, Amerika (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.9.

[3] Mary J. Cook, "The Women Characters in the Novels of Franz Kafka," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1947, p.58.

[4] Kafka, Amerika p.57.

with his English lessons[5]. Instead, however, Klara attempts to seduce him and, as was the case with Johanna, this seduction has damaging effects on his future as his studies are interrupted for the second time.

In both situations it is the women who are seen as the sexual aggressors, who can easily overpower the helpless Karl. In both cases Karl is also oblivious to the dire consequences to which these two attacks will lead him, whilst the women are more suspect as their more knowledgeable and worldly ways would suggest that they are more aware of what could result. It is the women who are in control.

One element in the protagonist's relationships with women which is very unusual in a Kafka novel is, as Sokel points out, that in Der Verschollene sexual intercourse takes place in a bed[6]. This does not imply, however, that the sexual act is more "normal" in Der Verschollene than in Kafka's subsequent novels because it is nonetheless always accompanied by an aura of rape and of the man being smothered by the woman.

The "Oberköchin", Grete Mitzelbach, is the next woman to appear in the novel and she introduces a new aspect of the male/female relationship into the work. Karl's relationship with the "Oberköchin" is not overtly sexual as it was in the case of the two previous women. Instead, what we find here is more of a mother/son relationship. One character actually draws attention to the maternal aspect

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[5] Kafka, Amerika p.82.

[6] Walter H. Sokel, Franz Kafka - Tragik und Ironie. Zur Struktur seiner Kunst (München: Langen, 1964), p.191.

of the "Oberköchin", "[...] ich wollte nur sagen, daß ja die Oberköchin so freundlich zu mir ist, wie es nur meine Mutter war"[7]. The "Oberköchin" takes Karl under her wing, giving him food, shelter and employment. Unlike the previous two women the "Oberköchin" does not hinder Karl's progress in any way - either intentionally or unintentionally. Instead, she does everything she can to help him and trusts him instinctively. Her power, however, is restricted by the "Oberkellner". It is he who controls Karl's future at the Hotel Occidental, and not the "Oberköchin", as Karl's dismissal demonstrates. Obviously there is something sexual going on between the "Oberköchin" and the "Oberkellner", as Karl observes as he leaves the former's office,

> Während er [Karl] sich zum Abschied verbeugte, sah er flüchtig, wie der Oberkellner die Hand der Oberköchin wie im geheimen umfaßte und mit ihr spielte[8]

If the "Oberköchin" is the mother-figure then the "Oberkellner" becomes, by implication, the father-figure. Thus, as in Die Verwandlung, the mother may sympathise with the son, but the ultimate power lies with the father, as does the mother's ultimate allegiance. Here then, Platzer's comment applies, when she writes that "the authority figure is always the master of the woman in one's life[...]"[9]. This is not true as a generalisation, however, as the two previous cases

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[7] Kafka, Amerika p.117.

[8] Kafka, Amerika p.161.

[9] Hildegard Platzer, "Sex, Marriage, and Guilt: The Dilemma of Mating in Kafka," Mosaic III, 4 (1970), p.130.

have shown. Klara, especially, was entirely independent of both her father and her fiancé Mack.

So far then, we have seen both sexual and motherly aspects in the female characters of this novel. In the next character, Therese Berchthold, we find something new. She is neither sexual nor motherly - instead she is attracted to Karl as a companion. She talks to Karl while he lies in bed totally unaware of any sexual tension that such a situation could arouse, as her first evening visit indicates,

> Karl lief auf den Fußspitzen zur Tür hin und fragte so leise, daß es, wenn man trotz allem nebenan doch schlief, niemanden hätte wecken können: "Wünschen Sie etwas?"
> Sofort und ebenso leise, kam die Antwort, "Möchten Sie nicht die Tür öffnen? Der Schlüssel steckt auf Ihrer Seite."
> "Bitte", sagte Karl, "ich muß mich zuerst anziehen."
> Es gab eine kleine Pause, dann hieß es: "Das ist nicht nötig. Machen Sie auf und legen Sie sich ins Bett, ich werde ein wenig warten."[10]

As with the other women, it is Therese who seeks out Karl rather than vice versa, and she becomes Karl's only true friend in the entire novel. Unlike the other women, however, Therese is "hilfsbedürftig"[11], and this creates an unusual relationship for a Kafka novel, as here each partner helps the other. The character of Therese also has certain echoes of Grete in Die Verwandlung. Therese not only sleeps in a room adjacent to Karl's and taps lightly on his door - as did Grete, but it is also she who cries when she realises

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[10] Kafka, Amerika p.115.

[11] Kafka, Amerika p.125.

that Karl will lose his job[12], just as Grete weeps for Gregor[13]. This, added to the non-sexual nature of their friendship, gives the relationship the air of one between brother and sister.

Perhaps the most striking female character of the novel, however, is Brunelda. In Brunelda we find repulsive sexuality coupled with perverted motherhood. Karl, Robinson and Delamarche all serve Brunelda who sits in the middle much like a queen bee. They are dependant on her whilst, at the same time, she cannot function without their help, as the following, somewhat repulsive, passage indicates,

> [...]sie [Brunelda] hatte beim Sitzen die Beine weit auseinandergestellt, um ihrem übermäßig dicken Körper mehr Raum zu verschaffen, nur mit größter Anstrengung, unter vielem Schnappen und häufigen Ausruhen, konnte sie sich so weit bücken, um ihre Strümpfe am obersten Ende zu fassen und ein wenig hinunterzuziehen, gänzlich ausziehen konnte sie sich nicht, das mußte Delamarche besorgen, auf den sie nun ungeduldig wartete.[14]

Brunelda, then, provides the money for food and shelter but is unable to survive on her own. In this chapter, "Ein Asyl", there are constant sexual undertones, as all four sleep in one room. Often sexual comments are made openly, such as Robinson's comments on Brunelda.

"Sie ist ja natürlich ein prächtiges Weib. Du -" und er

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[12] Kafka, Amerika p.157.

[13] Franz Kafka, Die Verwandlung in: Sämtliche Erzählungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), p.62.

[14] Kafka, Amerika p.188.

> winkte Karl zu sich herab, um ihm zuzuflüstern - "ich habe sie einmal nackt gesehen. O!"[15]

Such a sight is pleasing to neither Karl nor the reader. The thought of this overweight lady naked surrounded by tins of sardines overflowing with oil and squashed sweets[16] makes sex seem filthy and perverted. Whilst the sexual act had been aggressive with Johanna and Klara, now it also becomes dirty. Spilka describes Brunelda as being "[...]like an object of sexual repulsion, and at the same time, like an image of motherhood"[17]. Brunelda, then, has become a combination of both Klara and the Oberköchin in her sexual and motherly aspects. She is, however, not a positive embodiment as, unlike the "Oberköchin", she does not help Karl in his new life, rather, she holds him back, preventing him from advancing any further.

The next female character, Fanny, does help Karl. Fanny is the angel at the "Naturtheater von Oklahoma" who guides Karl, so that he can find employment. The character is somewhat problematic, as Karl already knows Fanny, and yet she has not been mentioned in the novel. Fanny is described as "eine alte Freundin"[18], but this presumably refers to earlier in his time in America and not to his homeland as otherwise his surprise on seeing her would be even greater. His

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[15] Kafka, Amerika p.189.

[16] Kafka, Amerika p.189.

[17] Mark Spilka, "America: Its Genesis," Franz Kafka Today, ed. Angel Flores and Homer Swander (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), p.110.

[18] Kafka, Amerika p.226.

relationship with Fanny seems to be on a platonic level similar to that with Therese. This relationship, however, seems more mature, as neither is dependant on the other, and there is a slight sexual tension, as Fanny opens up her robe to allow Karl to climb the ladder to her and blow her trumpet. Their reunion is a happy one with none of the hints of brutality or sordidness which coloured many of Karl's previous relationships with women. Spilka writes that Karl

> [...] has arrived [...] at the heterosexual stage of his development, since he now successfully climbs the ladder to the angel Fanny, on a stage where spirit is deliberately aligned with flesh - for at the recruiting camp there are devils as well as angels. And there is even an image of future parenthood at the end, as a father pushes a perambulator at the head of the new recruits.[19]

Here Spilka is placing too much certainty on Kafka intending the novel to have a happy ending - something which Brod maintained, but which is not backed up by Kafka's final sentence nor by his title for the novel. In addition, Kafka's diary entry of 30th September, 1915 certainly indicates a less than positive ending,

> Roßmann und K., der Schuldlose und der Schuldige, schließlich beide unterschiedslos strafweise umgebracht, der Schuldlose mit leichterer Hand, mehr zur Seite geschoben als niedergeschlagen.[20]

Spilka's insights, however, do make us aware of the change in Karl's relationships with women, even if Karl himself does not seem to have developed much.

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[19] Spilka p.113.

[20] Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.481.

When one looks at all of the women in the novel Der Verschollene one finds that only one character neither helps nor hinders Karl, and that is Therese. The "Oberköchin" and Fanny both try to help Karl in his new life in America, whilst the remaining three women - Johanna, Klara and Brunelda - all have a severely detrimental effect on his studies and job opportunities. Bergel writes,

> In this novel, as in so many of Kafka's other writings, women are presented as demons and vampires, ready to overpower and violate the male: the servant who forced his emigration to America; Pollunder's promiscuous and athletic daughter; and Brunelda the overweight Circe, who exists at the fringe of respectable society. Not only are the women responsible for his expulsion from the world of Europe, but they interfere with his adjustment to America.[21]

Whilst this is a slight over-generalisation, as has been shown above, it remains true in principle. Most women form an obstacle to Karl through no fault of his own, as it is these women who actively seek out Karl rather than the opposite.

It is vital to note that it is with those women who are a hindrance to Karl that there are sexual connotations. Sexuality becomes a trap in Der Verschollene, and Boedeker could have added Klara to his list when he concluded that

> Für Frauen wie Johanna, Brunelda und Leni ist Erotik Selbstzweck und zugleich Mittel, den Mann an sich zu binden und gefügig zu machen.[22]

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[21] Lienhard Bergel, "Amerika: Its Meaning," Franz Kafka Today, ed. Angel Flores and Homer Swander (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), p.120.

[22] Karl B. Boedeker, Frau und Familie im erzählerischen Werk Franz Kafkas (Bern/Frankfurt: Lang, 1974), p.94.

Thus, it is the sexual aspect of women and not just womanhood itself that makes women so dangerous. In Der Verschollene, they are not "purely instrumental"[23] nor are they "the vehicle or conduit for male activity"[24]. Instead, Karl's success, or lack of it, becomes entirely dependent on women. All of the women, with the possible exception of Therese, are capable of surviving alone, whereas in Karl's life it is women who give him food and shelter and women who take them away again. Karl is not alone in this as both Delamarche and Robinson are dependent on Brunelda. In Der Verschollene, the usual stereo typed roles are reversed, as men perform sexual and domestic services for women. For men, then, the women in Der Verschollene are dangerous exploiters once a sexual element enters the relationship. Kafka's men are powerless against the female weapon of sexuality.

3.2. The Inspiration Behind the Women

The women in Der Verschollene form types rather than individuals. There are aggressive women, motherly women, and so on. Kafka indicated this element of his work in a conversation with Janouch, who writes,

> Ich fragte, ob die Gestalt des sechzehnjährigen Karl Roßmann nach einer Vorlage gezeichnet sei.
> Franz Kafka sagte: "Ich hatte viele und keine Vorlage. Aber das ist ja alles schon Vergangenheit."

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[23] Evelyn T. Beck, "Kafka's Traffic in Women: Gender, Power and Sexuality," The Dove and the Mole: Kafka's Journey into Darkness, ed. M. Lazar and R. Gottesmann (Malibu: Undena, 1987), p.96.

[24] Beck. p.96.

> "Die Gestalt des jungen Roßmann sowie die des Heizers sind so lebendig," meinte ich.
> Kafkas Miene verdüsterte sich.
> "Das ist nur ein Nebenprodukt. Ich zeichnete keine Menschen. Ich erzählte eine Geschichte. Das sind Bilder, nur Bilder."[25]

What we are dealing with in Der Verschollene are not individuals. Instead, they are the concentrated abstract forms of types. In Brunelda, for example, we find a sordid picture of sex and decadence. Pratt adds that "Brunelda ist ein Sinnbild des materiell greifbaren und gegenwärtigen Vergnügens"[26]. She is not a character taken from real life - she is a condensed combination of traits present in people in real life and reflects our feelings towards such people.

In the same way, the "Oberköchin" is an archetypal mother figure. The interaction between Karl and the "Oberköchin" is like that between mother and son, and yet this does not mean that the "Oberköchin" represents Kafka's mother. This would be denying Kafka's use of "Bilder". Only if one looks at the characters of Der Verschollene as type embodiments does Kafka's comment of "Ich hatte viele und keine Vorlage" make sense, as he used many models and yet the end result was not identical to any one of them. For these reasons Fickert's conclusion that

> Since Fanny begins with "F", as Karl does with "K", the assumption follows that Fanny represents Felice, at least in

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25 Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981), p.45.

26 Audrey E. Pratt, "Franz Kafka und sein Vater: das Verhältnis der beiden und dessen Einwirkung auf Kafkas Werk," M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1949, p.63.

> the significance she had for Kafka in regard to his aspiration to be a writer[27]

is overly simplistic, even when Fickert's qualification in the latter half of the quotation is taken into consideration. To equate one character in the work with one character from Kafka's life leaves little or no room for artistic interpretation. Just as one may find elements of Felice in Fanny then one can also find such elements in other characters. To single it down to Fanny because her name begins with "F" is far too easy.

3.3. The Link Between "Der Verschollene" and Kafka's Diaries and Letters

Kafka himself made no comment of a specific link between Fanny and Felice in either his diaries or his letters. In a letter to Felice dated 1st November, 1912, however, he does acknowledge some link between Felice and his writing.

> Wie Sie nun aber auch mit meinem Schreiben verschwistert sind, trotzdem ich bis dahin glaubte, gerade während des Schreibens nicht im geringsten an Sie zu denken, habe ich letzthin staunend gesehn. In einem kleinen Absatz, den ich geschrieben hatte, fanden sich unter anderem folgende Beziehungen zu Ihnen und zu Ihren Briefen: Jemand bekam eine Tafel Chokolade geschenkt. Es wurde von kleinen Abwechslungen gesprochen, die jemand während seines Dienstes hatte. Weiterhin gab es einen telephonischen Anruf. Und schließlich drängte jemand einen andern schlafen zu gehn und drohte ihm, ihn, wenn er nicht folgen werde, bis auf Zimmer zu führen, was sicher nur eine Erinnerung an den Ärger war, den Ihre Mutter hatte, als Sie so lange im Bureau blieben.[28]

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[27] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern:Lang, 1979), p.43.

[28] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.66.

The passage to which Kafka is referring is the penultimate paragraph of the chapter "Hotel Occidentale" and it includes both Therese and Karl. Initially it would seem then that there is a link between Therese and Felice. However, if one reads this letter carefully, one finds an equally close connection between Karl and Felice. Whilst it is Therese and Felice who must be urged to bed, it is Karl and Felice who receive chocolate. In effect then, Felice is indeed closely linked to Kafka's work but she influences the work as a whole rather than the individual characters.

It is not surprising that Felice's presence should have infiltrated into the work when one takes into consideration Kafka's mood over much of the time that he was writing Der Verschollene. Three months after meeting her he writes,

> Jetzt habe ich mein Leben um das Denken an Sie erweitert und es gibt wohl kaum eine Viertelstunde während meines Wachseins, in der ich nicht an Sie gedacht hätte, und viele Viertelstunden, in denen ich nichts anderes tue. Aber selbst diese steht mit meinem Schreiben in Zusammenhang, nur der Wellengang des Schreibens bestimmt mich und gewiß hätte ich in einer Zeit matten Schreibens niemals den Mut gehabt, mich an Sie zu wenden.[29]

and then, one month later,

> Mein liebstes Mädchen, das ganze heutige Schreiben an meinem Roman war nichts anderes als unterdrückte Lust, Dir zu schreiben [...].[30]

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[29] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.66.

[30] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.187.

Thus, one can see that while Kafka wrote Der Verschollene, Felice was constantly in his thoughts. For Kafka his writing was a living and vital part of his life[31] just as was Felice. Kafka pleads with Felice, "Liebste, ich bitte Dich jedenfalls mit aufgehobenen Händen, sei nicht auf meinen Roman eifersüchtig,"[32] and adds "[...] durch mein Schreiben halte ich mich am Leben, halte ich mich an jenem Boot, auf dem Du, Felice, stehst"[33]. Without writing Kafka felt that he would lose his grip on Felice, consequently he traps Felice within the work, perhaps unwittingly at first, in order to gain a firmer grasp on her. Writing was Kafka's life blood, and his life (including Felice obviously) is taken up into his work. No proof can be found anywhere in Kafka's personal writings, however, that Felice can be equated with any one particular character in Der Verschollene. Rather, she gives an atmosphere to the work - an atmosphere where women can rule the lives of helpless men.

3.4. The Extent of the Justification for the Biographical Approach

Karl Roßmann of Der Verschollene is a naive young man, unable to resist the "attacks" of Johanna and Klara. He is successful in relationships on a non-sexual level but he cannot incorporate the physical aspect of love. Where this is done, as in Delamarche's relationship with Brunelda, for example, then it is grotesque and

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[31] see Franz Kafka, Briefe 1902-1924 (New York: Schocken, 1958), p.109.

[32] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.226.

[33] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.227.

repulsive. In this novel, it is always the women who introduce this element and in so doing overpower their male counterparts.

Kafka himself acknowledged a connection between himself and the novel. He wrote to Felice, "Mein Roman geht ja wenn auch langsam vorwärts, nur ist sein Gesicht dem meinen schrecklich gleich"[34]. When one looks at the novel to see what Kafka may have been referring to, one is struck most immediately by the theme of bachelorhood and the threat of women. Pratt notes that in Kafka's works "alle seine Bilder des Junggesellenstandes sind Reflektionen seines eigenen einsamen Lebens,"[35] and this is perhaps clearest in this novel. Whilst Kafka had few problems in his relationships with Ottla, for example, his relationships of a romantic nature were far more problematic. Kafka was obviously attracted to women, and yet this attraction, whilst inspiring him, also hindered his work, as the women and literature battled each other for attention. Karl, too, is helped by women, and yet, simultaneously, they have the power to prevent him from advancing in life.

What we find in Der Verschollene, then, is the dilemma of bachelorhood and sexuality. Sexuality in the novel is represented by characters such as Klara and Brunelda as being both enticing and harmful. Sexuality in Kafka's own life was at this time represented by Felice. This obviously does not mean that figures like Brunelda are based on Felice. What it does show, however, is that Felice posed the treat of womanhood - Kafka could not have his writing and

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[34] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.179.

[35] Pratt p.43.

Felice, just as Karl cannot have his uncle and Klara. All the women then, including Felice herself, embody Kafka's and the bachelor's dilemma. The attitudes and fears of the novel are indeed biographical, and it is these fears that the women represent, rather than acquaintances from Kafka's life. The characters are emotions and fears rather than individuals. The biographical aspect of the novel concentrates exclusively on Kafka.

4. Der Prozeß

> Jemand mußte den Dichter Franz Kafka verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas "Böses" getan hätte, lieferte sein Kunstschaffen den Erweis für eine neurotische Existenz in der Zeit von 1883-1924.[1]

This statement, which Müller has formed around the opening sentence of the novel Der Prozeß[2], immediately exposes one of the critics' main concerns with this work: the extent of its biographical content. Kafka started writing Der Prozeß at the end of July, 1914, soon after the break up of his first engagement to Felice Bauer, and many people have linked the two events. Some critics go so far as to contend that the subject of the novel is Kafka's feelings of guilt in connection with his engagement.[3] This then, is the most crucial novel to take into consideration when examining biographical content in the works of Franz Kafka, as it is here that the largest amount of debate has arisen, and the largest support for the biographical approach has been found.

4.1. The Female Characters

Here, as in the last chapter, it is most advisable to deal with the characters in the order in which they appear in the work, thus avoiding granting excess emphasis to any one character.

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[1] Gernot Müller, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Biographie am Beispiel Franz Kafkas," Studia Neophilologica, 56 (1984), pp.105/106.

[2] Franz Kafka, Der Prozeß (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983).

[3] John Winkelman, "Felice Bauer and The Trial," The Kafka Debate: New Perspectives for Our Time, ed. Angel Flores (New York: Gordian, 1977), p.322.

From the very start of the novel, Kafka is observed by an old woman.[4] When K.[5] enters Fräulein Bürstner's room, this woman is joined by a gentleman "mit einem auf der Brust offenen Hemd, der seinen rötlichen Spitzbart mit den Fingern drückte und drehte."[6] Here, then, the phallic connotations of this action already hint at the sexual tone that is to follow.

The first important female character, whom we then meet, is Frau Grubach. Frau Grubach is K.'s landlady and not exceptionally bright. K., however, feels a need to confide in her. "Nur mit einer alten Frau kann ich davon sprechen,"[7] he thinks, and it seems that this is because of the absence of any sexual intent. Here, there is little need to impress, it is more like a mother/son conversation. Frau Grubach, however, is more concerned with reassuring K. than in helping him or telling him the truth. K. soon realises "[...] das Wertlose aller Zustimmungen dieser Frau [...]"[8]. Frau Grubach cannot help K., because she has no connection with the Courts and she, therefore, becomes unimportant to him. She has no knowledge of this other world to which K. is drawn and is more interested in the mundane affairs of her guests, such as Fräulein Bürstner.

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[4] Kafka, Prozeß p.7,

[5] The "Josef" is dropped after the first sentence and is rarely used in the rest of the novel.

[6] Kafka, Prozeß p.14.

[7] Kafka, Prozeß p.22.

[8] Kafka, Prozeß p.23.

Like Frau Grubach, Fräulein Bürstner is also unconnected with the law. She lives in the unsuspecting world in which K. lived before his arrest. Her name, too, suggests a cleanliness which will later contrast with the squalor of the law offices. Significantly, however, Fräulein Bürstner is due to start work in a lawyer's office the following month, and she confesses that for her, "Das Gericht hat eine eigentümliche Anziehungskraft [...]."[9] When one remembers the guard's comment that

> "Unsere Behörde, soweit ich sie kenne, und ich kenne nur die niedrigsten Grade, sucht doch nicht etwa die Schuld in der Bevölkerung, sondern wird, wie es im Gesetz heißt, von der Schuld angezogen [...]"[10]

it seems that, although Fräulein Bürstner is initially independent of the Courts, they will soon become connected and that the "cleansing" aspect which K. is seeking in her, will soon cease to exist. At the moment, however, she is merely exploited by them, as they use her room for their hearing. K.'s attraction to Fräulein Bürstner has two causes. Most obviously, he thinks that she may be able to help him, "Sie werden mir dann in meinem Prozeß ein wenig helfen können,"[11] he comments, and yet he soon abandons this idea. But before he is aware that she may have any legal connections, K. is already attracted to her sexually. He defends her against Frau Grubach's character attacks[12] and insists on meeting her, even though this isn't really

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[9] Kafka, Prozeß p.27.

[10] Kafka, Prozeß p.11.

[11] Kafka, Prozeß p.27.

[12] Kafka, Prozeß p.24.

necessary. Before K. is prepared to admit it, she already has power over him:

> Er hatte kein besonderes Verlangen nach ihr, er konnte sich nicht genau erinnern, wie sie aussah, aber nun wollte er mit ihr reden und es reizte ihn, daß sie durch ihr spätes Kommen auch noch in den Abschluß dieses Tages Unruhe und Unordnung brachte. Sie war auch schuld daran, daß er heute nicht zu Abend gegessen und daß er den für heute beabsichteten Besuch bei Elsa unterlassen hatte.[13]

At the end of their meeting, his sexual interest in her becomes obvious:

> K. [...] lief vor, faßte sie, küßte sie auf den Mund und dann über das ganze Gesicht, wie ein durstiges Tier mit der Zunge über das endlich gefundene Quellwasser hinjagt. Schließlich küßte er sie auf den Hals, wo die Gurgel ist, und dort ließ er die Lippen lange liegen.[14]

This sudden outbreak of passion is animalistic and disturbing. It is carried out in an atmosphere of guilt and secrecy, and its similarity to K.'s death cannot be ignored. K. dies "wie ein Hund"[15], and "[...] an K.s Gurgel legten sich die Hände des einen Herrn [...]"[16]. A connection must be made here between K.'s "guilt" and his death. A woman who looks like Fräulein Bürstner, but may not have been her, leads K. towards the place of his execution.[17] In trying to prove his innocence to Fräulein Bürstner K. actually succeeds in establishing his own guilt. Emrich writes that on kissing Fräulein

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[13] Kafka, Prozeß p.25.

[14] Kafka, Prozeß p.30/31.

[15] Kafka, Prozeß p.194.

[16] Kafka, Prozeß p.194.

[17] Kafka, Prozeß p.191.

Bürstner, K. "[...] hat [...] sich sein Todesurteil gesprochen."[18] Thus, there is a link between K.'s sexually aggressive act, his trial, and his subsequent execution.

K. tries to fool himself that Fräulein Bürstner "[...] stand mit dem Prozeß in keiner Verbindung."[19] In his next female encounter, however, it is obvious that the major attraction is due to her link with the courts. This woman is the wife of the court attendant. As soon as K. becomes aware of the situation, K. offers to help her, "nicht etwa nur aus Nächstenliebe, sondern außerdem deshalb, weil auch Sie mir helfen können."[20] Initially horrified that this married woman should openly make love with the student, K., however, soon considers taking her for himself, as he thinks that there is perhaps "[...] keine bessere Rache an dem Untersuchungsrichter und seinem Anhang, als daß er ihnen diese Frau entzog und an sich nahm."[21] The wife, then, is the first woman to become an obvious tool used by K. in his attempt to win his case. When he loses her, it is his "[...] erste zweifellose Niederlage [...]"[22], and this is viewed directly in relation to his trial. Trying to gain the woman and then losing her obviously works detrimentally for K. and is a victory for the court. Power over other individuals and possession of them becomes vital.

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[18] Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958), p.276.

[19] Kafka, Prozeß p.86.

[20] Kafka, Prozeß p.47.

[21] Kafka, Prozeß p.52.

[22] Kafka, Prozeß p.53.

For this reason, K. desperately tries to regain contact with Fräulein Bürstner in an attempt to have a woman on his side. This time, however, Fräulein Montag comes in his way. Fräulein Montag becomes the intermediary between the two parties, and again there is an obvious power struggle. K. wants to reach Fräulein Bürstner, but Fräulein Montag puts obstacles in his way. This leads to resentment on the part of K. who knows, in his words, "[...] daß Fräulein Bürstner ein kleines Schreibmaschinenfräulein war, das ihm nicht lange Widerstand leisten sollte."[23] Women have become objects to K. which must be possessed. When the Hauptmann kisses Fräulein Montag's hand, then for K. "[...] der Handkuß hatte sie für ihn zu einer Gruppe verbunden."[24] This gives them an advantage over the solitary K. who is constantly seeking an ally who can assist him.

In a further attempt to aid his case, K. strikes up a relationship with Leni. Leni is one of the few female characters who actively participate in this mutual "acquiring" of a partner. It is she who summons K. by smashing a plate[25] and she who states, "Jetzt gehörst du mir."[26] Leni lures the far from unwilling K. into a situation which is obviously disastrous for his trial. In an attempt to find out how to defeat the court, K. again does nothing but reassert his guilt. It is Leni who K. sees as a means of escape, who actually "dirties" him and prevents him from progressing in his case.

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[23] Kafka, Prozeß p.72.

[24] Kafka, Prozeß p.72.

[25] Kafka, Prozeß p.92.

[26] Kafka, Prozeß p.96.

K. mistakenly regards Leni as a help and not as a hindrance. Instead of listening to his lawyer, K. lies with Leni under the picture of a judge. Thus we can see, as Sokel points out, that the sexual act has become self-destructive.[27] K.'s sexual encounters with Fräulein Bürstner, the court attendant's wife and Leni are all carried out to aid his case, but all do nothing but further prove his guilt. K. changes partners in the hope that it will help him, when it actually achieves the opposite. His relationships with Frau Grubach and Fräulein Montag do not have this effect, however, and in this we can see that it is K.'s sexual attitudes that seal his fate. With Leni the bestial qualities, already present when K. kisses Fräulein Bürstner, are stressed even more when she draws attention to her "körperlichen Fehler,"[28] namely her webbed fingers. This bestial imagery is then carried forward to K.'s execution, as has already been illustrated.

The girls outside Titorelli's studio, who are the final female characters with whom we need concern ourselves, have acquired what can almost be referred to as a herding instinct. Again, there is mention of a "Körperfehler"[29] and a connection with the law.[30] These women have become one mass. Emrich concludes, "Titorelli kann das weibliche Geschlecht nur noch kollektiv sehen, in seiner ewigen

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[27] Walter H. Sokel, Franz Kafka - Tragik und Ironie. Zur Struktur seiner Kunst (München: Langen, 1964), p.189.

[28] Kafka, Prozeß p.96.

[29] Kafka, Prozeß p.122.

[30] Kafka, Prozeß p.129.

Mischung von Naivität und Sexualität,"[31] and this is also true of both K.'s and the reader's viewpoint by now. After a continued changing of partners any individuality becomes irrelevant until, at the end of the novel, we find this attitude clearly expressed:

> [...] K. lag auch nichts daran, ob es bestimmt Fräulein Bürstner war, bloß die Wertlosigkeit seines Widerstandes kam ihm gleich zum Bewußtsein.[32]

K. is constantly drawn to women because of their connection to the court. The power of these women over the court, however, is a sexual one. Whilst neither the court attendant's wife nor Leni understand the law, they do understand how to manipulate it through the granting of sexual favours. K. then, is attracted to them, because they have this power, but then he too falls prey to their seductive airs. The women's sexuality draws K. to them just as the Court is drawn to guilt. Mykyta writes that,

> Through their sexuality women not only taint the uncorruptability of the [...] Courts as origins of authority, but they also exert the powerful fascination of "temptations of the flesh".[33]

Women corrupt both the court and K., and yet they themselves remain "innocent". No mention is made of women being summoned to trial by the court. No women can be found waiting in the dusty hallways of the law offices, and the "Türhüter"-tale tells only of men. Women, it seems, provide the method for men to destroy them-

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[31] Emrich p.291.

[32] Kafka, Prozeß p.191.

[33] Larysa Mykyta, "Women as the Obstacle and the Way," Modern Language Notes (95), p.634.

selves. They are immune to their own sexuality but form a trap for men. As soon as men succumb to this female power they become corrupted. Platzer points out however, that,

> If one could overcome or avoid the assertion of guilt that sensuality establishes, one might through the agency of woman reach that ultimate authority which she serves and so be reconciled with it.[34]

In Der Prozeß, however, this is impossible as the sensuality is always bestial and often literally dirty. This is not a sensuality connected with love, but rather a sensuality that thirsts for life from the other partner. Bites frequently replace kisses, and the need for satisfaction is completely egocentric.

In conclusion, the women of Der Prozeß possess sexual power. K. seeks them out because he thinks that this power can help him in his battle against the courts. Inevitably, however, K. himself falls victim to this power and thus increases instead of decreases his guilt: his guilt being his egocentric lust for satisfaction. The women of the novel are interchangeable, but their sexual power remains constant.

4.2. The Inspiration Behind the Women

As Der Prozeß was written so soon after Kafka's break up with Felice, many people have searched for traces of this situation within the novel. The link that is most commonly referred to is that between Felice and Fräulein Bürstner. Winkelman refers to many

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[34] Hildegard Platzer, "Sex, Marriage, and Guilt: The Dilemma of Mating in Kafka," Mosaic III, 4 (1970), p.126.

similarities which he feels make the two women inseparable from one another:

> [...] they have the same bodily build [...] and hairdo [...]; the blouse seen in Fräulein Bürstner's room is that worn by Felice [...]; both cross their legs in the same manner [...]; both are fond of attending the theater in the evenings, as they must, since they are employed by day [...]; Fräulein Bürstner is interested in law, and Felice's position as Prokuristin involved her in occasional court appearances.[35]

When one looks at this in detail, however, one finds that perhaps the physical similarities are not so exceptional after all. Felice's build was not particularly unusual, and most women cross their legs. Also, most people go to the theatre in the evening, and Kafka's mention of law is not surprising, as he had studied this subject and it is the topic of the novel. Perhaps the object used most frequently to show a link between the two ladies is the white blouse. This is supposed to refer to either the blouse Felice was wearing when they first met, or the blouse Felice wore for the engagement photographs. This link, which seems quite conclusive at first, becomes more suspect with time. Kafka, we know, was an extremely careful observer of people, and Felice's was not the only blouse he noticed. He noticed a stain on Frau Tschissik's short-sleeved blouse[36], for example, and if he noticed this, then why couldn't he have noticed the white blouses that we often see being worn by ladies in photographs with Kafka. The blouse then, is not the conclusive proof that one might at first believe it to be.

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[35] Winkelman p.320.

[36] Ronald Hayman, K: A Biography of Kafka (London: Weidenfeld, 1981), p.123.

Another element which is perhaps more convincing evidence of the inspiration behind Fräulein Bürstner is that her initials are the same as Felice Bauer's. This becomes even more interesting when one notices that Kafka actually wrote F.B. more often than Fräulein Bürstner throughout the novel and that it was Max Brod who then decided to write the name out in full.[37] In his diaries, Kafka almost exclusively substituted Felice's full name for the initials F.B., and it would seem inevitable that he must have noticed this similarity.

There are further points which seem to indicate that Felice was used as a model for Fräulein Bürstner. For example, Winkelman points out that K.'s meeting with Fräulein Bürstner is extremely calm and conventional until K.'s sudden outburst of passion.[38] This corresponds to the casual nature of Kafka's first meeting with Felice and the passion of his subsequent correspondence with her. Winkelman also mentions Fräulein Bürstner's unresponsiveness which could again be linked with Felice's passive role in the relationship.[39]

K. also tries to involve Fräulein Bürstner in his trial but fails after the intervention of an intermediary just as Grete Bloch stepped in after Kafka's attempt to involve Felice in his writing and his life. It is also interesting to note that Kafka stopped writing the novel once his relationship with Felice started up again. Winkelman

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[37] Max Brod, afterword, Der Prozeß, by Franz Kafka (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.229.

[38] Winkelman p.319.

[39] Winkelman p.320.

finds enough similarities here to produce a biographical "key" to the entire novel, concluding that, "Franz Kafka's guilt consisted in his violation of the sanctity of Felice Bauer's soul,"[40] and that this is shown when K. is called into Fräulein Bürstner's room by the court officials.

Fräulein Bürstner is not the only character in the novel to be considered by some critics as having been inspired by people from Kafka's life. Fräulein Montag is frequently associated with Grete Bloch for a variety of reasons. Firstly, both women play intermediary roles, preventing the development of a relationship out of allegiance to the other woman. In addition, it has been noted that Fräulein Montag has a slight limp whilst

> [...] a full-length photograph of Grete Bloch [...] shows an extraordinarily short and light woman whose right shoulder is lower than her left, although it is her left leg that is bent at the knee [...].[41]

This link, however, is perhaps somewhat tenuous, as nowhere is there actually any mention of Grete Bloch having a limp. Fräulein Montag's "companion" Captain Lanz has been associated with Ernst Weiss who also tried to help the unhappy couple and was present at the break up of the engagement.[42]

One of the few people who really sticks up for K. in the novel is his cousin Erna. Erna was also the name of Felice's sister, and

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[40] Winkelman p.320.

[41] Winkelman p.320.

[42] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern: Lang, 1979), p.53.

letters and diary entries indicate that it was Erna who frequently took Kafka's side in the Bauer family.[43]

Finally, there is also a possible connection between Frau Grubach and Kafka's mother, as Fickert points out:

> [...] Frau Grubach, in her befuddled way wants to help the protagonist but, instead, puts obstacles in his path. She is suspicious of Fräulein Bürstner, whom Josef K. expects to play a key role in freeing him from his entire enslavement to routine - Kafka's mother once persuaded him to hire a detective in Berlin to look into Felice's past and reputation.[44]

As we know so much about Kafka's life, it is rarely difficult to find a possible model for his literary characters as this last section has shown. As an end in itself, however, this exercise is pointless if it does not increase our understanding of the text, and this aspect will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. Firstly, however, let us turn to Kafka's own comments on the work.

4.3. The Link Between "Der Prozeß" and Kafka's Diaries and Letters

Throughout Kafka's extensive diaries and letters, one finds numerous mention of Der Prozeß and other matters relating to it. One sees a clear link between the vocabulary of the novel and the vocabulary Kafka uses when referring to the break up of his engagement. This is so extreme at times that Pawel comments that the drama of their relationship

> [...] ist in zwei Fassungen überliefert: in Kafkas Briefen an Felice und in seinem unvollendeten Meisterwerk Der Prozeß.

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[43] This point is also taken up by Winkelman p.320.

[44] Fickert p.51.

> Sie unterscheiden sich durch Darstellungsebene und Perspektive. Der Briefschreiber verteidigt sich höchst subjektiv, der Romanschriftsteller hingegen bekennt sich schuldig, ein Mensch zu sein.[45]

This comment, however, can be taken much further, because as early as 1911, long before Kafka met Felice, he was already writing diary entries which pointed towards this novel and this life-style. On 9th October, 1911, Kafka wrote,

> Sollte ich das vierzigste Lebensjahr erreichen, so werde ich wahrscheinlich ein altes Mädchen mit vorstehenden, etwas von der Oberlippe entblößten Oberzähnen heiraten [...]. Vierzig Jahre alt werde ich aber kaum werden [...].[46]

This is not the immature attitude of a young adolescent. Kafka was 28 years old when he wrote this. It shows that, to a large extent, he had already decided what was to come. He has a negative attitude towards his success with women which then became realised both in Der Prozeß and in his own life. In a later diary entry of the same year, we find, "Auch im Talmud heißt es: Ein Mann ohne Weib ist kein Mann."[47] Thus Kafka, who has decided that he will remain without a wife, now further condemns himself to a life of guilty failure in the face of his religion. It is this sense of guilt which pervades Der Prozeß and brings the despair which dictates the mood of most of Kafka's diary entries.

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[45] Ernst Pawel, Das Leben Franz Kafkas (München: Hanser, 1986), p.89.

[46] Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.89.

[47] Kafka, Tagebücher p.174.

It is not just the mood of Der Prozeß that can be found in these early entries, however. On 23rd October, 1912, over 22 months before Kafka was to write this novel, we find the following sentence in a letter to Felice:

> Und wenn alle meine drei Direktoren um meinen Tisch herumstehen und mir in die Feder schauen sollten, muß ich Ihnen gleich antworten [...].[48]

It is this situation which can be found in Der Prozeß when the factory owner and K.'s boss stand over him at his desk.[49]

The connection with the office is continued in another, later letter. Here though, we see the dichotomy between the office and writing which in Der Prozeß is a dichotomy between the office and guilt:

> Die Sorgen um Dich [Felice] und mich sind Lebenssorgen und gehören mit in den Bereich des Lebens und würden deshalb gerade mit der Arbeit im Bureau sich schließlich vertragen können, aber Schreiben und Bureau schliessen einander aus, denn Schreiben hat das Schwergewicht in der Tiefe, während das Bureau oben im Leben ist.[50]

However, Kafka intentionally tried to involve Felice in his writing, just as K. involves women in his trial. Both, then, cause failure through their own actions. Thus the path for Der Prozeß had been laid well before the break up of Kafka's engagement to Felice.

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[48] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.50.

[49] Kafka, Prozeß p.112/113.

[50] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.412.

Josef K. appears in Kafka's writings for the first time on 29th July, 1914,[51] 17 days after the end of his engagement. This Josef K. appears in Kafka's diaries in a passage which is obviously fictional. He is a doorkeeper and the son of a businessman. Subsequent diary entries and letters written during this period echo the motifs of Der Prozeß.

When Kafka first became engaged, the event was hardly a joyful one. In a diary entry Kafka wrote,

> Aus Berlin zurück. War gebunden wie ein Verbrecher. Hätte man mich mit wirklichen Ketten in einen Winkel gesetzt und Gendarmen vor mich gestellt und mich nur auf diese Weise zuschauen lassen, es wäre nicht ärger gewesen. Und das war meine Verlobung, und alle bemühten sich, mich zum Leben zu bringen und da es nicht gelang, mich zu dulden, wie ich war. F. allerdings am wenigsten von allen, vollständig berechtigterweise, denn sie litt am meisten. Was den andern blosse Erscheinung war, war ihr Drohung.[52]

Here the motif of guilt without having to commit a crime is clear, just as it is in the novel. Kafka's very presence makes him guilty in the eyes of others, and makes him feel guilty as the cause of Felice's suffering. Kafka's engagement has already become a trial in which he is being psychologically tried rather than physically. What is important here, however, is that it is the engagement per se which leads Kafka to feel "[...] gebunden wie ein Verbrecher," and not, more specifically, his engagement to Felice. The guilt is internal rather than external and would seem to result from Kafka's attitude to marriage rather than his attitude to Felice.

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[51] Kafka, Tagebücher p.414.

[52] Kafka, Tagebücher p.384.

One person who saw problems in this relationship was Grete Bloch, and she became the catalyst for the end of the engagement which only lasted one month. It became increasingly obvious to her, after an extensive correspondence with Kafka, that a marriage between her friend Felice and Kafka was a mistake. In July, this lead to what Kafka referred to as "der Gerichtshof im Hotel."[53] Here, in the presence of Felice, Erna Bauer and Ernst Weiss, Kafka listened as Grete read from his letters. Kafka was obviously found guilty, and the wedding was abandoned. From the reports of this incident, there is no evidence that Kafka ever tried to defend himself. Instead, it seemed that Felice had now realised what he himself had known all along - the relationship could not succeed. This had become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Throughout this period, Kafka frequently used the imagery of the law, captivity and the concept of being intrinsically guilty, without having to perform any one guilty act. It is this atmosphere which pervades Der Prozeß, particularly in the first chapter. Kafka's life, as he views it in his diary and his literature, becomes almost indistinguishable at this point. Brod regarded this episode of Kafka's life as being the inspiration behind Der Prozeß and In der Strafkolonie. He writes:

> Ich glaube nicht fehl zu gehen, wenn ich in diesen furchtbaren Erschütterungen, in denen Kafka immer wieder die Gewissensfrage an sich selbst stellt, [...] den Ursprung

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[53] Kafka, Tagebücher p.407.

> zweier neuer großer Werke suche, die bald nach der Entlobung entstanden.[54]

This event, which Kafka had always predicted would happen, had finally happened, and it shook Kafka to the core of his existence. It was as if he always wanted to be told that he could not be happy, but now that he had been told he was unable to cope with the situation. Kafka had failed in his concrete existence; all that was left for him was to seek refuge in his literary existence. On 28th July, 1914, Kafka wrote,

> Meine Unfähigkeit zu denken, zu beobachten, festzustellen, mich zu erinnern, zu reden, mitzuerleben wird immer größer, ich versteinere [...]. Wenn ich mich nicht in einer Arbeit rette, bin ich verloren.[55]

This work was to be Der Prozeß. Kafka now poured his existence into this work. In this way he was slowly able to come to terms with what had happened to him. "Ich kann wieder ein Zwiegespräch mit mir führen und starre nicht so in vollständige Leere,"[56] he writes a few weeks later. Through literature Kafka was slowly regaining his grip on himself. It was as if he was re-forming himself and thus permitting this "Zwiegespräch" with himself. Literature enabled him to both lose himself and find himself simultaneously. Here he could forget the problems of the office, for example, and explore his inner self. That Kafka becomes his own companion becomes evident two weeks

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[54] Max Brod, Franz Kafka. Eine Biographie (Erinnerungen und Dokumente) (New York: Schocken, 1946), p.179.

[55] Kafka, Tagebücher p.411.

[56] Kafka, Tagebücher p.422.

later, when he writes, "Ich darf mich aber nicht verlassen, ich bin ganz allein."[57]

It was at this crisis point that Kafka seems to have become most aware of Felice's paradoxical significance to his work. In a letter from November, 1914, Kafka writes to her, "Sieh, Du warst doch nicht nur der größte Freund, sondern gleichzeitig auch der größte Feind meiner Arbeit [...]."[58] Just as she had unintentionally sparked off Das Urteil, she had now inspired Der Prozeß. But Felice posed a constant threat, seeking stability and a home - in other words, an end to the conflict which lead Kafka to create great literature. Kafka needed her (or more accurately, someone like her) to create the conflict, and yet she must never be allowed to win, as this would bring an end to his writing. By the 30th November the fire of conflict caused by the breaking off of the engagement was already dwindling. "Ich kann nicht mehr weiterschreiben [...]. Ich bin auch wieder kalt und sinnlos,"[59] he writes, recognising the need "[...] für die Zwischenzeit wieder F. zu bekommen."[60] Kafka had lost his inspiration. Felice was no longer threatening his work and no longer inspiring it - he had reached a point of non-existence. By 20th January, 1915, Kafka had returned to Felice with the sorrowful comment, "Ende des Schreibens. Wann wird es mich wieder aufnehmen? In

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[57] Kafka, Tagebücher p.436.

[58] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.616.

[59] Kafka, Tagebücher p.444.

[60] Kafka, Tagebücher p.444.

welchem schlechten Zustand komme ich mit F. zusammen!"[61] Already, it seemed the relationship was doomed and further conflict was just around the corner. Kafka immediately tried to draw Felice back into his work. When he read Der Prozeß to her,[62] only the Türhütergeschichte drew her attention. For the rest, Kafka concluded that there was "[...] keine Verbindung mit der Zuhörerin."[63]

The Prozeß motifs, however, did not finish here. Up until his death, Kafka made comments which echoed this novel. In October, 1917, for example, Kafka speaks of "Klagebriefe F.s"[64], and in a letter to Brod later that year, Kafka compares his "elendes Leben" to the concluding sentence of Der Prozeß.[65] Much of his novel stayed with him, even though the characters changed. In a letter to Milena Jesenka, dated 12th June, 1920, we find vocabulary which is very reminiscent of K.'s first encounter with Leni. He writes,

> Du bist für mich keine Frau, bist ein Mädchen, wie ich kein Mädchenhafteres gesehen habe, ich werde Dir ja die Hand nicht zu reichen wagen, Mädchen, die schmutzige, zuckende, krallige, fahrige, unsichere, heiss-kalte Hand.[66]

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[61] Kafka, Tagebücher p.458.

[62] Kafka, Tagebücher p.460.

[63] Kafka, Tagebücher p.460.

[64] Kafka, Tagebücher p.535.

[65] Franz Kafka, Briefe 1902-1924 (New York: Schocken, 1958), p.195.

[66] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Milena (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), p.59.

A connection can now be found between Milena and Leni, even though Kafka did not become acquainted with Milena until October, 1919. The link, then, lies less in the individual woman and more in her type. In Milena, Kafka had found another unsuccessful relationship, and his personal "trial" could continue. In September, 1922, Kafka explained to Brod that,

> Im Grunde ist doch die Einsamkeit mein einziges Ziel, meine größte Lockung, meine Möglichkeit und, vorausgesetzt, daß man überhaupt davon reden kann, daß ich mein Leben "eingerichtet" habe, so doch immer im Hinblick darauf, daß sich die Einsamkeit darin wohlfühle.[67]

For this reason, Milena could now become part of Der Prozeß. The women had changed, but the situation had not, and like K., Kafka now admitted to "[...] kindliche Hoffnungen (besonders hinsichtlich der Frauen)."[68]

4.4. The Extent of the Justification for the Biographical Approach

As has been shown in the preceding two sections of this chapter, there are many biographical links between Kafka's life and Der Prozeß. Most specifically these links refer to Felice and Fräulein Bürstner, and the break up of their engagement and the internal trial. To make this link even firmer, critics have drawn attention to the coincidence of dates - K. is executed on his thirty-first birthday, whilst Kafka's engagement was officially broken nine days after his thirty-first birthday, meaning that the decision to end the

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[67] Kafka, Briefe p.415.

[68] Kafka, Tagebücher p.565.

relationship must have fallen very near, if not on, his exact birth date.

Thus it cannot be denied that there is a link between the fictional and biographical events. However, if one attempts to follow this link throughout the novel, one meets many dead ends. What is the significance of the court attendant's wife, for example. and who is Titorelli? In the first chapter much can be explained on the biographical level. The novel, however, is composed of ten chapters.

The links between Fräulein Bürstner and Felice are quite broad. Essentially, we connect them only because of their initials, the white blouse and K.'s unsuccessful attempt at courtship. Initials are a superficial reason for linking two characters, and we find that even in Kafka's next novel, written well after he had stopped seeing Felice, he still uses the same initials. That these initials may have become a "trademark" cannot be overlooked. In addition, the white blouse was hardly exceptional. In the same year as writing Der Prozeß Kafka noted in his diary, "Das Mädchen im Kaffeehaus. Der schmale Rock, die weiße, lose, fellbesetzte Seidenbluse, der freie Hals [...]."[69] and this girl, to whom he was referring, was not Felice. For this reason, one cannot assume that Fräulein Bürstner's white blouse links her with Felice.

This brings us, then, to the subject of the unsuccessful relationship. Kafka had many unsuccessful relationships, not only with Felice, but also with Julie and Milena, for example. We have seen

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[69] Kafka, Tagebücher p.351.

from previous quotations that Kafka almost willed this unhappiness, as only then could he write. For this reason, the individual women become insignificant - they become exchangeable. Women in Der Prozeß are a means to an end, whether consciously or subconsciously, just as they were in Kafka's life. The subsequent guilt then flowered into self-torture and literature. That no individual woman is meant is backed up at the end of the novel as Brod points out:

> Es ist tatsächlich nicht wichtig, ob die Erscheinung Fräulein Bürstner oder nur ihr ähnlich ist. Der ganze mißlungene Eheversuch war ja, wie sich noch zeigen sollte, für Kafkas Leben als Schema und nicht individuell bedeutsam, unabhängig von der Person der Braut [...].[70]

For this reason, it would be wrong to place too much emphasis on Felice Bauer and more accurate to regard her simply as a woman.

In much the same way, Kafka's diary entries referring to the "Gerichtshof im Hotel"[71] should also not be regarded too specifically. Here Kafka was playing with the concept of guilt - something which he had done before and was to do again. Kafka had achieved what he always knew would happen. He had been found guilty in his treatment of women. His letters, which he knew would be read, made this verdict inevitable without him actually having to announce his guilt in public. Like K., he could avoid plunging the knife into himself. Unfortunately, the women were merely a means for him to expose this guilt and were not significant individually. The work then, is biographical in reference to K. and Kafka. The female

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[70] Brod p.180.

[71] Kafka, Tagebücher p.407.

characters, however, are less specific and can be equated with people both from this time in Kafka's life and with people from his future. Both the fictional and factual women are victims, sometimes willing, sometimes unwilling, of K.'s and Kafka's personality.

5. Das Schloß

Kafka's final novel was written in 1922 from February to 20th August, at which point Kafka suddenly broke off working on the novel, and it remained unfinished. Other than Ein Hungerkünstler and Erstes Leid this was Kafka's first literary work in five years. These five years had been marred by ill-health, two failed engagements, namely to Felice Bauer and Julie Wohryzek, and a tempestuous, again mainly epistolary, affair with the married Milena Jesenka-Polak. From June of 1922 until after he had stopped working on the novel, Kafka stayed at Plana with Ottla for health reasons. It was also during this time that Kafka was pensioned off by the "Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt", again due to ill-health. Thus, we can see that the circumstances surrounding Das Schloß[1] were by no means cheerful and that they are echoed in the somber tone of the novel.

5.1. The Female Characters

In Das Schloß, unlike in Der Prozeß, the protagonist no longer exchanges one woman for another. Nonetheless, as Mykyta points out, "[...] their attractiveness seems for the most part to be created by their connections to the Castle."[2] In fact, women seem to be the main source of contact with the Castle and also offer most of the information to K.. Although the Castle is dominated by men (only one

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[1] Franz Kafka, Das Schloß (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985).

[2] Larysa Mykyta, "Women as the Obstacle and the Way," Modern Language Notes, 95 (1980), p.628.

woman is mentioned[3]), the village is dominated by women. These women are often described as being physically stronger than the men[4], and they control most situations. These women also have power over the Castle, albeit in a restricted sense. As in Kafka's other novels, the primary force that these women possess is their sexuality. In this manner the women form a physical link to the Castle which is unattainable by their male counterparts in the village. These women, however, unlike those in Der Prozeß, sometimes choose to refuse to exploit or be exploited by their sexuality and "[...] resist being reduced to unofficial connective stepping-stones to the Castle."[5] To make this clear we must look at the individual characters.

The first female character that K. encounters is an excellent example of the power of the village women. She is Gardena, the landlady of the "Brückenhof". It is the landlady who effectively runs the inn, and she is physically superior to her husband. She has power over K.'s life, because she is able to both influence Frieda and to evict K. Her large size and maternal attitude towards Frieda would make her a total mother-figure, were it not for one element: that she is a former mistress of Klamm. Gardena, unlike some other women in the novel, did not refuse to give herself to a court official. Instead, she leapt at the opportunity. The affair, however, was extremely brief (perhaps precisely because she offered no challenge), and now her life is sad and unsatisfied. Nothing can

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[3] Kafka, Schloß p.17.

[4] Kafka, Schloß p.9, p.17, p.61, p.125, etc..

[5] Mykyta p.631.

replace having been Klamm's mistress. Emrich points out, "Arbeit, Wirtschaft, Ehe sind für sie Betäubungsmittel, Ersatz für das unerreichbare, verlorene Glück Klamms."[6] Gardena has fallen from the ultimate position of mistress, and yet she still maintains a power which sets her above the male villagers. She functions as "Frieda's conscience"[7] and offers K. advice on the Castle and how to behave. No male villager offers K. any advice, only those men who are in the service of the Castle comment on his behaviour.

The next female character gives K. most of the information on the Castle, namely Olga. Although Olga's motives may be somewhat suspect (she may be helping K. only to help her own family or to defeat Frieda), she spends a great deal of time explaining the ways of the Castle to K.. Again, she is physically strong[8] and together with her sister is the motivating force in the family. Although her brother Barnabas is the breadwinner in the family, it is Olga who gets him his position, demonstrating both strength and intelligence. She provides a sense of stability and security against which K. has to fight:

> Olga sprach mit K. leise und wie vertraut, es war angenehm, mit ihr zu gehen, fast so wie mit dem Bruder. K. wehrte sich gegen das Wohlgefühl, aber es bestand.[9]

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[6] Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958), p.337.

[7] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern: Lang, 1979), p.71.

[8] Kafka, Schloß p.34.

[9] Kafka, Schloß p.36.

Olga forms perhaps one of the most likeable characters in the novel, precisely because of this sense of security which she also offers the reader, who by this time is also somewhat disorientated.

This sympathetic character provides a strong contrast to her colder sister Amalia who offers the strongest resistance to the Castle by refusing Sortini and offending his messenger.[10] Through Amalia's resistance both the powerlessness and the power of the Castle are revealed. Sortini cannot force her to come to him and neither does the Castle itself punish Amalia in any way. It is the villager's fear of the Castle and not the Castle itself which brings about the family's downfall - thus Amalia reveals that the Castle's power rests purely on fear and superstition. Ironically, Amalia's strength leads to her family's destruction. Sortini is physically attracted to Amalia. As Meyer reveals, "Sortinis Begehren richtet sich [...] 'auf das Mädchen mit der roten Kette', nicht auf Amalia als Individuum."[11] However, it is precisely her individuality that causes the conflict. For things to run smoothly the women must simply obey, like Gardena, even if this leads to their own personal unhappiness. Neither the Castle nor, more especially, the villagers can tolerate anything that differs from the norm, as Amalia demonstrates. Amalia, however, has transcended this norm. She has attained what Emrich describes as an "'übermenschliche' Höhe."[12]

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[10] Kafka, Schloß p.179-193.

[11] Sabine S. Meyer, "Die Rolle der Geschlechte im Kafkas Roman Das Schloß," Newsletter of the Kafka Society of America (June: 1981), p.31.

[12] Emrich p.372.

Here she has acquired an overview but lost her connection with life. She is cold - as if dead.

In the next character, Frieda, however, we find a woman who is smothered by existence. She possesses the warmth of life, but lacks an overview. Unlike Amalia, she belongs in the world. In Frieda we also find a combination of both adherence and rebellion. Frieda gives herself to Klamm only to leave him later for K.. In her we find a host of paradoxes which make the character both fascinating and slightly suspicious. Like Amalia, Frieda defies the Castle, and yet her defiance is more subtle and calculated. Her calculations remain, however, in this world, unlike Amalia's, which are characterised by an "other-worldliness". It places Frieda in an advantageous rather than disadvantageous position. Frieda has already developed her own link to the Castle and is able to exploit this situation to ensure that she can return to the "Herrenhof" if she is unable to stay with K. It is Frieda who seduces K. and Frieda who exposes her action to Klamm. Thus, she controls the situation, and it is always her influence that provides them with shelter, when K. himself would refuse to accept it. Initially then, Frieda appears to be both powerful and independent. However, on closer examination one discovers that in reality Frieda is totally incapable of existing independently. Frieda lives off men. At no time in the novel is Frieda not attached to a man. She moves from Klamm to K. to Jeremias and ultimately back to Klamm. When Frieda says to K., "Du weißt nicht, was Treue ist,"[13] we are inclined to agree with her, whilst in

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[13] Kafka, Schloß p.234.

actual fact it is Frieda who is unfaithful. Frieda's power lies in her sexuality and her knowledge of how to use it to exploit men, whilst at the same time playing the victim. It is Frieda who seduces K. and not vice versa as is so often maintained. In addition, Frieda is not "[...] von Klamm losgerissen"[14], but rather, leaves him of her own volition. Thus Frieda, who seems so naively independent in her all-consuming love for K., actually appears to be far more cunning on closer examination. Frieda is a parasite, successfully living off men whilst they try to live off her. Like a parasite, she is dependent on the host which she exploits. Her power comes solely through her connection to men, without whom she is helpless. Meyer notes, "[...]'im Namen Klamms' drängt [...] Frieda die Knechte in den Stall zurück,"[15] illustrating that alone Frieda is powerless. Frieda, then, gains her existence through the existence of others. What seems at first to be individuality is, in fact, the exact opposite. In this light, Frieda's constant attempt to create a warm and comfortable home for K. takes on the appearance of an attempt to anaesthetize an unsuspecting victim rather than seeming to be an altruistic act.

One person who does believe Frieda to be cunning rather than a victim is Pepi. Pepi, however, veers too far to the other extreme, as Frieda is a threat to her. In Pepi we again find a dependency on men, although this time it is more obvious. For Pepi K. is "[...]

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[14] Kafka, Schloß p.239.

[15] Meyer p.25.

ein Held, ein Mädchenbefreier"[16], and she wants him to protect not only herself, but also her friends Henriette and Emilie. This again is a denial of individuality. When Pepi exclaims, "Daß wir jetzt einen Mann als Helfer und Schutz haben, wird sie glücklich machen,"[17] she is ignoring any aspect of individual personalities. What interests her is that the women have a man to protect them. Emrich maintains that this exposes

> die Wahrheit, daß alle Eheschließungen, die auf dem bloßen Schützbedürfnis einer durch die Welt enttäuschten Frau beruhen, bewußt oder unbewußt kollektiven Charakter annehmen müssen.[18]

Although this is perhaps a somewhat extreme view, it does nonetheless reemphasise the collective nature of the women. Like the other women in the novel, with the exception of Amalia, Pepi draws her existence from men. Having done this, she then has the strength to rule over them. Once K. accepts Pepi's offer, he will be totally dependent on the three girls, and the roles reverse. The relationship, then, is not a caring one, but rather one based on egocentric motivation. Fickert's observation that Pepi is a nickname for Josef[19], a false name which K. uses[20], would seem to back up this idea of egocentricity. If one is to regard Pepi as a continuation of K., however, then one must also include all of the other characters,— for example

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[16] Kafka, Schloß p.273.

[17] Kafka, Schloß p.293.

[18] Emrich p.333.

[19] Fickert p.73.

[20] Kafka, Schloß p.25.

Artur and Jeremias. The coincidence of names, then, is perhaps less significant than it at first appears. This does not detract, however, from her importance as a character who exposes their true motivation and that of others.

Pepi's constant striving to impress people through her dress, thus through externals, is repeated in a more extreme manner in the landlady of the "Herrenhof". It is also very difficult to distinguish between this woman and her counterpart at the "Brückenhof". Obviously, both are in control of their environment and both dress in old-fashioned and inappropriately gaudy clothes. This would seem to indicate that this landlady, too, has been in close contact with the Castle, and for a longer time than Gardena, judging by the vast amount of dresses she possesses. Again the individuality of the women is lost.

In general, then, the women in Das Schloß form a collective body of womanhood. The woman's only power is her sexuality, which means that, although this makes her superior to men it also makes her dependent on them. The women also supply warmth and stability, thus enabling the men to return to the security of the womb. Only the women are able to form a physical link between the village and the male-dominated Castle, and this inevitably increases their sphere of influence. The sexuality that these women offer is a dirty one, yet again and corrupts what Mykyta sees as the "[...] purity and absolute truth"[21] of the Castle. Thus K.'s goal of being recognised by the

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[21] Mykyta p.631.

Castle and using women as his instrument becomes even more questionable.

K. undeniably exploits women in an attempt to reach the Castle. His actions, however, are not as blatant as those of Josef K. in Der Prozeß. In addition, K. is now matched, if not overtaken, in the role of exploiter by the women themselves. In Das Schloß, the women succumb to the higher power, but do so fully aware of the advantages it will bring them. In this way they allow themselves to be exploited so that they can subsequently become the exploiters themselves. K. seems to be hopelessly outmatched by all the women in the novel, and it is he who is actually in the subordinate position rather than the women. It is not that K. is not calculating in his use of women, but rather that these women are even more calculating.

5.2. The Inspiration Behind the Women

Opinions on the models for the female characters are extremely mixed. The novel was written during Kafka's affair with Milena and so, inevitably, many critics believe that Milena lies behind the character of Frieda. Emrich, for example, notes,

> Frieda kann nicht dem Anspruch K.s gewachsen sein trotz jenes überlegenen Blicks, der K. bis ins Innerste traf und ihn ihr für immer verband[22]

and draws attention to this and its similarity with Kafka's fascination with Milena. Kafka wrote, "Ihre Augen strahlen das Leid der

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[22] Emrich p.352.

Welt nieder,"[23] in reference to Milena, and it is here that Emrich believes to find the connection. Much about Milena does indeed seem to correlate with the women in Das Schloß, not just specifically with Frieda. Buber-Neumann describes Milena as possessing "[..] sehr viel Widerspruchvolles. Weibliche Zartheit neben männlicher Entschluß-kraft,"[24] which would liken her to many of the female characters: Olga, Frieda, Amalia, and Pepi for example. In addition, Kafka referred to Milena as being in possession of a "leben-gebenden Kraft"[25], and calls her "Mutter Milena"[26], which would liken her to the more earthy characters of the two landladies.

Many critics, however, feel that not Milena is implied but rather Felice. Brod comments, "in gewisser Hinsicht ist F[elice] auch späterhin, nach dem endgültigen Abschied, für Franz eine Idealgestalt geblieben,"[27] and for this reason, even after the relationship, critics see Felice in this Frieda just as they saw her in Frieda Brandenfeld. Fickert points to the similarity in both K.'s and Kafka's domesticity which was brought to them by Frieda and Felice,

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23 Franz Kafka, Briefe an Milena, ed. Jürgen Born and Michael Müller (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), p.41.

24 Margarethe Buber-Neumann, Milena, Kafkas Freundin (München: Langen, 1978), p.103.

25 Kafka, Briefe an Milena p.104.

26 Kafka, Briefe an Milena p.104.

27 Max Brod, Franz Kafka. Eine Biographie (Erinnerungen und Dokumente) (New York: Schocken, 1946), p.187.

respectively, and notes that "the nightmare of a life of domestic tranquility comes upon K. [...]."[28] He adds,

> Possessing her [Frieda] K. finds himself not elevated to Parnassian heights, but on the floor among the pools of stale beer. When Frieda transforms his garret room into a comfortable, liveable place, K. becomes suspicious of her and resentful of his assistants, who, under her guidance, have joined the couple to constitute a "family." Kafka's sometime hope of combining breadwinning and writing seems to be symbolically represented in this arrangement.[29]

Here, both Felice and Julie could be implied, however, as both presented Kafka with "a comfortable, liveable place." Milena never posed such a threat and remained safely unattainable.

This, however, does not bring an end to the possible inspirations. Brod claims that the work was inspired by Kafka's sudden exposure to peasants on the Planá[30], whilst Platzer reveals that

> An affair that Brod recalls particularly was Kafka's infatuation with a barmaid from the Trocadero by the name of Hansi. She is apparently the model for such characters as Frieda and Pepi in The Castle.[31]

Platzer, however, gives no explanation for why this should be the case other than the identical professions. In addition, this also leaves no understanding of why Frieda and Pepi should be so different from each other if they are both based on the same girl.

Kafka himself, while writing about prostitutes, notes that,

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[28] Fickert p.71.

[29] Fickert p.71.

[30] Brod p.201.

[31] Hildegard Platzer, "Sex, Marriage, and Guilt: The Dilemma of Mating in Kafka," Mosaic III, 4 (1970), p.121.

> Ich will nur die dicken ältern, mit veralteten, aber gewissermaßen durch verschiedene Behänge üppigen Kleider[32]

and this calls into mind not only Pepi's attire but also that of the two landladies.

Thus we can see that the abundance of possible inspiration for the female characters almost seems to cancel itself out, as the factual women become as interchangeable as the women they supposedly represent. This theory will be dealt with in more detail in the final section of this chapter. Firstly, however, one must again turn to Kafka's own diaries and letters to seek further justification for this approach.

5.3. The Link Between "Das Schloß" and Kafka's Diaries and Letters

Although Kafka had resumed diary-writing by 1922 there is very little that refers directly to Das Schloß. Instead, much of what was written deals with the worsening relationship with Milena and his poor health. Thus it is the mood of the diaries more than any one particular episode or person that reminds the reader of the novel that Kafka was writing at this time. For example, for 23rd January, 1922, we find the following entry,

> Es starrt im Mittelpunkt des imaginären Kreises von beginnenden Radien, es ist kein Platz mehr für einen neuen Versuch, kein Platz heißt Alter, Nervenschwäche, und kein Versuch mehr bedeutet Ende.[33]

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[32] Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.330.

[33] Kafka, Tagebücher p.560.

Here we can already sense the task which K. sets himself. He rotates around the Castle in a constant but confused attempt to prove himself to be a Land Surveyor; something which he is not. Thus the whole context is imaginary, and yet, as K. explains, "[...] es handelte sich um meine Existenz."[34] This mood is evident in the diary entry which presents the circular and life-threatening task of life. Six days later, Kafka made another entry which reminds us of the novel. He wrote, "[...] ich habe Liebende gern, aber ich kann nicht lieben [...]."[35] In Das Schloß, love is a very problematic issue. The women supposedly fall in love with all men from the Castle whilst the villagers are in turn attracted to the women but not through love. Talking of Frieda, Jeremias comments, "Sie ist ein gutes, kluges Mädchen, eine gewesene Geliebte Klamms, also respektabel auf jeden Fall."[36] There is no mention of love. K., too, seems incapable of love and employs need as a replacement. His inability to love does not, however, deter him from women, and it is here that he usually seeks help. Kafka's diaries also show us that, despite this inability to love, he too was constantly drawn to women. In 1916 he had written,

> Was für Verirrungen mit Mädchen trotz aller Kopfschmerzen, Schlaflosigkeit, Grauhaarigkeit, Verzweiflung. Ich zähle: es sind seit dem Sommer mindestens sechs.[37]

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[34] Kafka, Schloß p.88.

[35] Kafka, Tagebücher p.566.

[36] Kafka, Schloß p.225.

[37] Kafka, Tagebücher p.500.

And now in April, 1922, we find the following entry,

> Nur Kleinigkeiten [...] fielen mir auf, etwa, daß gerade die Frauen, die mir auf der Gasse die schönsten und die schönst-angezogenen schienen, schlecht sein sollten.[38]

In Das Schloß the most expensively and elaborately dressed women are those who have been mistresses of court officials. Pepi's elaborate but tasteless dress is part of her attempt to join these ranks. So again, we can see an overall link between this entry and the novel.

Unlike during his relationship with Felice, no diary entries or letters can be found which directly link Milena and Kafka's work. This is surprising when one considers the similarity between the two relationships. Both were basically founded on communication through letters, and both relationships spurred Kafka into a new period of writing. There are, however, no dedications to Milena and no characters with the initials M.J.. Any links which are to be found are tenuous and by no means specific. The mood of the novel can be found, as has been demonstrated above, but when one looks in the diaries and letters for information of specific characters one draws a blank. From the time that Kafka wrote to Brod, "[...] ich habe die Schloßgeschichte offenbar für immer liegen lassen müssen,"[39] on 11th September, 1922, the novel has remained unfinished and largely unexplained in the biographical context despite copious attempts to the contrary.

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[38] Kafka, Tagebücher p.579.

[39] Franz Kafka, Briefe 1902-1924 (New York: Schocken, 1958), p.413.

5.4. The Extent of the Justification for the Biographical Approach

Throughout this chapter, several reasons for not employing a specifically positivist reading of Das Schloß have come to light. Ironically, the women in this novel are less interchangeable than those in Der Prozeß from K.'s point of view, and yet we still cannot find a factual model for them. The reason for this is simple: by 1922 it was the real women in Kafka's life who had become interchangeable. If one were to shuffle together Kafka's letters to Felice and Milena, it would be extremely difficult to separate them again. This does not mean that the two women were the same, but, rather, that Kafka's reaction to them was. For this reason any critic claiming to see, for example, Felice in Frieda would find it very difficult to explain why he does not also see Milena. Kafka himself, inadvertently commented on the uselessness of such approaches which, for example, equate Hansi with Pepi, when he wrote,

> [...] daß solche Prosa natürlich nicht um ihrer selbst willen da ist, sondern eine Art Wegzeiger auf dem Weg zu einem Menschen, auf einem Weg, auf dem man immer glücklicher weitergeht, bis man in einem hellen Augenblick erkennt, daß man ja gar nicht weiterkommt, sondern nur in seinem eigenen Labyrinth noch umherläuft, nur aufgeregter, verwirrter als sonst.[40]

It seems that any attempt to tie down Das Schloß to the concrete world only diminishes the work rather than enriches it. This is the case with Cook's belief that "in Das Schloß [...] the women represent various religious attitudes,"[41] as the reader then becomes blinkered

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[40] Kafka, Briefe an Milena p.22.

[41] Mary J. Cook, "The Women Characters in the Novels of Franz Kafka," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, p.56.

and disregards anything that does not quite fit into the pattern. For example, no critic linking Frieda and Felice has tried to answer why Hans' sister is also called Frieda. Instead this problem is conveniently overlooked.

A more general, all-encompassing outlook has to be taken when one considers this novel, perhaps even more so than was necessary for Kafka's preceding works. Emrich writes that in Das Schloß "[...] wird freilich der ganze Reichtum menschlicher Liebesbeziehungen bis in hintergründigste Bezirke entfaltet,"[42] and it is precisely this richness which we must take into consideration.

The women in Das Schloß resist any attempt to place them within a specific biographical context. In K. we can, however, as always, find Kafka. When Pratt wrote,

> Der Roman Das Schloß drückt am klarsten Kafkas paradoxen Zustand und seine hoffnungslosen Versuche, irgendeine Erklärung seines Daseins zu erreichen, aus [...]. K. ist der Junggeselle, der eine Frau und Kinder haben möchte,[43]

she exposed this aspect of the work. K. is definable and yet the "Frau und Kinder" remain faceless. Kafka made many, albeit half-hearted, attempts to end his bachelorhood and find the warmth which Frieda offers K.. For this reason, Frieda and every other female character can be any one of Kafka's girlfriends; the individual becomes irrelevant, for Kafka as it did for K..

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[42] Emrich p.292.

[43] Audrey E. Pratt, "Franz Kafka und sein Vater: das Verhältnis der beiden und dessen Einwirkung auf Kafkas Werk," M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1949, p.71.

Therefore, of all of Kafka's works which have been considered in this thesis, Das Schloß provides the strongest evidence for why Kafka's women should be considered in a general, rather than specific, biographical context.

6. Kafka's Women: An Overview

6.1. Kafka's Fictional Women

In the works that have been studied in this thesis, one can see both developments and similarities in the female characters. In Kafka's works, one essentially finds three types of female characters, and these were clearly illustrated in the three short stories dealt with in chapter two of this thesis. The first type of woman is the woman who creates a threat due to her domesticating nature. This can be found in Das Urteil in the character of Frieda Brandenfeld. Marriage to Frieda immediately excludes other possibilities in the protagonist's existence; this is the price of stability. The more adventurous side of one's personality is smothered by the safer environment of marriage. It is for this reason that Georg must relinquish his friend in Petersburg.

The second type of woman shown is the female family member. As in Die Verwandlung, this obviously includes mothers and sisters, but the group can also be extended to include both more distant relatives[1] and also mother-figures, sister-figures and so on. This group is characterised by its attempts to help the protagonist rather than hinder him. This is usually displayed in a simple attempt to make the protagonist feel good, and these acts do not usually benefit the woman to any great extent. In Grete Samsa, however, we find a character whose motivation becomes increasingly self-centred, and this is due to the introduction, with puberty, of the third element: sexuality.

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[1] cf. Erna in Der Prozeß.

The sexual aspect of women distracts the protagonist from his duty to the extent that the woman becomes a hindrance to the male protagonist. In the case of Rosa, in Ein Landarzt, this is entirely unintentional on her part, and both she and the doctor become the unsuspecting victims of her sexuality. This, however, is not always the case, which brings us to the progressions and developments in the female characters.

The three short stories give us the basic types of women, whilst in the three novels we can follow the development and merging of these groups. In Der Verschollene we find two types of women: the motherly or sisterly type, and the sexual type. Nobody in the novel presents Karl with the threat of domesticity. The motherly/sisterly women, such as the Köchin and Therese, try to help Karl whilst the sexual group, such as Johanna and Klara, slow his progress. These women use their sexuality intentionally, although they do this for immediate gratification and not for any long term goal. Mykyta writes that

> Women seem to be only temporary accidental ruptures and interruptions in the smooth flow of undifferentiated textuality.[2]

This can be seen to be true in Kafka's first novel. Neither Johanna nor Klara really benefit from their seduction of Karl which is blatant and endangers their own positions. Thus these women use their sexuality, but they use it in a naive manner. This is only slightly different in the case of Brunelda, where we find both

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[2] Larysa Mykyta, "Women as the Obstacle and the Way," Modern Language Notes, 95 (1980), p.640.

sexuality and the mother-figure combined. Brunelda uses her sexuality to slightly more effect, gaining three servants as a result. Paradoxically, however, this in turn increases her dependence on men on a superficial, level as she cannot even dress without them.[3]

Summing up, in Der Verschollene we find a somewhat milder picture of women than what is to follow. The women either help Karl, disproving many critics' theory that "Kafka schuf kein schönes Frauenbild,"[4] or they blatantly attempt to seduce him for little or no gain to themselves. This changes slightly in the next novel.

In Der Prozeß not only do the women exploit the protagonist, but the protagonist also exploits the women. Mykyta notes that this novel is "[...] steeped in sexuality and eroticism,"[5] and that, "very few events [...] proceed without some kind of female involvement [...]."[6] This is so true that only Frau Grubach and Erna have no sexual role in the novel and that all of the female characters have some effect on the events in the novel.

The predominating group of women in Der Prozeß are those who form a link between the courts and sexuality. K. is drawn to Fräulein Bürstner, the Court attendant's wife and Leni, both because they can be of use to him in his trial and because of their sexuality. Mykyta

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[3] Franz Kafka, Amerika (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.188.

[4] Audrey E. Pratt, "Franz Kafka und sein Vater: das Verhältnis der beiden und dessen Einwirkung auf Kafkas Werk," M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1949, p.84. See also Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles (Bern: Lang, 1979), p.83 for a similar conclusion.

[5] Mykyta p.627.

[6] Mykyta p.627.

points out that by linking K.'s goal with sexuality, as K. regards this as the only way that this goal is attainable, the women, "[...] undermine the possibility of the purity, the permanence, and universality of hierarchical governing structures,"[7] as the Court takes advantage of the Court attendant's wife and Leni just as does K.. Now, then, we find women being exploited as much as the men, unlike in Der Verschollene. The women could exercise even more power, as they hold the ultimate weapon of sexuality, but they never seem to use this to its full potential and as a result actually gain very little. They do, however, inadvertently succeed in establishing K.'s guilt through his connection with this base, bestial world, where sex is a purely physical act, rather than also having emotional connotations. Sokel writes,

> So verdammen sie ihn zur Strafe der Selbstverachtung, Selbstentfremdung und Trostlosigkeit, weil ihm im "Schmutz" des Geschlechtakts der unendliche Abstand zwischen ihm selbst und der in Reinheit thronenden Machtgestalt erst ganz bewußt wird.[8]

While this ignores the fact that the Court's purity is in fact only an illusion it does nonetheless show that the source of his guilt is internal and is inextricably linked with female sexuality.

In Das Schloß, the conflict becomes more extreme as women again take the upper hand in the battle of exploitation. As in Der Prozeß, the protagonist uses women in an attempt to reach his goal, namely to reach the Castle and be recognised as a Land Surveyor. The differ-

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[7] Mykyta p.639.

[8] Walter H. Sokel, Franz Kafka - Tragik und Ironie. Zur Struktur seiner Kunst (München: Langen, 1964), p.191.

ence now is that the women also want to achieve specific goals. For example, Olga wants the Castle's forgiveness for her sister's actions, Frieda wants a husband, and Pepi wants to become Klamm's new mistress. Thus, on the one hand these women are exploited by K., but on the other hand they allow themselves to be exploited as long as it is to their advantage. Cook writes that,

> What sets the women characters apart from the male figures is not that they do not have ends which they endeavor to accomplish, but their means of accomplishing these ends. The approach of the women to their problems is characterised by a certain indirectness; that of the men, by directness.[9]

It is due to this indirectness on the part of women that Frieda's exploitative role is frequently overlooked, and Kafka's women are incorrectly viewed as victims. In Das Schloß, the women choose whether or not to use a man's attraction towards them to their own advantage. Amalia, for example, consciously decides that she will neither be exploited by nor exploit the Castle. This attitude would have been unthinkable in Der Prozeß.

One element in Das Schloß that is new to the novels is the female threat of domesticity which is very obvious here. Olga provides K. with a feeling of protection in much the same way that Frieda attempts to make a home for him. These attempts, however, carry the danger of distracting K. from his goal by making him too comfortable to bother to fight. This feeling of warmth, then, is something which must be resisted if one is to succeed. Frieda comes closer to "ensnaring" K. than any other character in any of the novels comes to

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[9] Mary J. Cook, "The Women Characters in the Novels of Franz Kafka," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1947, p.60.

capturing the male protagonist. In fact, the relationship between K. and Frieda, disastrous though it may seem, is actually the most stable sexual relationship presented anywhere in the works covered by this thesis.

When one looks at all of the women dealt with here, one finds that nowhere does the protagonist find a relationship which makes him truly happy and that, as Cook points out, "[...] none of Kafka's heroes' relationships [...] lead to marriage."[10] All of the sexual relationships within Kafka's work are essentially a failure, and only those platonic relationships with mother- or sister-figures do not cause more problems than they solve. That one can summarise these relationships with such broad strokes indicates the lack of individuality that Kafka's characters possess. As has already been shown, Kafka's women fall into three groups, (i) domesticating, (ii) motherly, and (iii) sexual. These groups can exist both individually or in a combination (Frieda, for example, belongs to groups (i) and (iii)). The implication of this is that it becomes "womanhood" that is represented rather than individual women. Emrich concludes,

> Daher ist auch die Frau nicht Indvidualität, sondern Kollektivwesen, Vertreterin einer Gattung, mit jeder anderen Vertreterin beliebig austauschbar.[11]

As a result, Kafka's women have what has been referred to as "[...] a curiously static quality,"[12] as they do not move beyond the premises

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[10] Cook p.63.

[11] Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958), p.333.

[12] Cook p.57.

of their group. This aspect of Kafka's work has brought much criticism especially from feminist critics. Beck, for example, writes,

> The most serious implication of the texts' male-centered angle of vision is that it makes impossible the existence of real women, and substitutes in their place false constructs, projections of male fears and fantasies, idealizations and demonizations of women, and asks us to accept these as real representations of ourselves.[13]

What is overlooked here, however, is that Kafka does not attempt to create "real women" any more than he attempts to create "real men." Karl is "Der Verschollene", Josef K. is concerned only with his guilt, and so on. No character possesses all of the elements necessary for a fully realistic, well rounded character, but instead always possesses at least one of them, which is then magnified.

It cannot be denied, however, that, when womanhood is linked with sexuality, the overall effect is negative. Women present hurdles, which the male protagonist could always run around but which he chooses to jump instead, thereby creating a reason (or excuse) for his failure. Koch writes that,

> [...] all the female figures in his [Kafka's] art, as in his life, remain figures for that encounter with the Other that- it is the whole premise of his art - always fails.[14]

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[13] Evelyn T. Beck, "Kafka's Traffic in Women: Gender, Power and Sexuality," The Dove and the Mole: Kafka's Journey into Darkness and Creativity, ed. M. Lazar and R. Gottesman (Malibu: Undena, 1987), p.98.

[14] Stephen Koch, "The Secret Kafka," New Criterion (Jan: 1984), p.24.

From the protagonist's hurdles in fiction, we now move on to the hurdles which Kafka erected for himself in his own life.

6.2. Kafka's Factual Women

Kafka's relationships with women were very mixed. Whilst his relationship with his sister Ottla was excellent and his relationship with his mother and other sisters was good, if not perfect, his romantic endeavors were characterised by failure. Kafka was engaged three times, twice to the same women, but never married.

Kafka's first two engagements in 1914 and 1917 were to Felice Bauer. This was probably the most influential of Kafka's relationships as well as the most disastrous. The relationship, based on very few meetings but copious letters, seemed doomed from the start. At no time did the couple seem to possess the happiness which one would associate with love. Pratt notes that, "von Anfang an war immer einer der Verlobten nah daran, die Verlobung rückgängig zu machen,"[15] and Kafka frequently confronted Felice with reasons why they should not marry. Almost one year before his first engagement Kafka noted down a "Zusammenstellung alles dessen, was für und gegen meine Heirat spricht."[16] In this list, only the first point is positive and concludes that "Die Verbindung mit F. wird meiner Existenz mehr Widerstandskraft geben."[17] However, by the third point

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[15] Pratt p.37.

[16] Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.310.

[17] Kafka, Tagebücher p.310.

he writes, "Ich muß viel allein sein. Was ich geleistet habe, ist nur ein Erfolg des Alleinseins,"[18] which immediately cancels out his first positive comment. Thus we can see that from the start Kafka had severe doubts about marriage. Nonetheless, he persisted. It seems, however, that Kafka was constantly laying the path for their break up, without actually having to make the break himself. His letters to Grete Bloch are an obvious example of this, as he must have realised that they would get back to Felice. Kafka, however, had to decide between either marriage to Felice or writing, as he had established that he could not have both. He chose literature. Nonetheless, it would be unfair to claim that Kafka was totally heartless, as many passages show a true devotion. Brod remembers one particularly moving scene,

> Er [Kafka] hatte eben F. zur Bahn gebracht. Sein Gesicht war blaß, hart und streng. Aber plötzlich begann er zu weinen. Es war das einzigemal, daß ich ihn weinen sah. Ich werde diese Szene nie vergessen, sie gehört zu dem Schrecklichsten, was ich erlebt habe [...]. Und hier weinte er, hier sagte er schluchzend: "Ist es nicht schrecklich, daß so etwas geschehen muß?"[19]

The relationship was capable of making Kafka extremely sad, but not of making him equally happy. As has been stated, this seems at least partly self-induced, as Kafka could have either ended the relationship or married Felice. Instead, however, he chose to let the situation linger on. What Kafka achieved by doing this were years of conflict which gave him the ideal environment for his

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[18] Kafka, Tagebücher p.310.

[19] Max Brod, Franz Kafka. Eine Biographie (Erinnerungen und Dokumente) (New York: Schocken, 1946), p.204.

writing. Kafka kept the idea of marriage and happiness so tormentingly close that he was constantly aware of his unhappiness. As Koch notes, "life with Felice was a life not to be lived: that was its function from the beginning."[20] It created the atmosphere necessary for Kafka to be able to write, thus when Kafka chose writing over Felice, it was still necessary to keep Felice (or any woman) close at hand. Unfortunately, Koch could not have been more accurate when he wrote,

> What Felice Bauer perhaps never fully understood about this endlessly discussed choice between life and art was the degree (I almost said the appalling degree) to which all Felice ever really represented to Kafka was more prose.[21]

It is perhaps even more tragic to note that this pattern continued throughout Kafka's life. In 1919, Kafka became engaged to Julie Wohryzek. Before the engagement, however, we already find the following diary entry,

> Im Riegerpark gewesen. An den Jasminbüschen mit J. auf und abgegangen. Lügenhaft und wahr, lügenhaft im Seufzen, wahr, in der Gebundenheit, im Vertrauen im Geborgensein. Unruhiges Herz.[22]

Again, this does not contain any sign of great happiness. Only days before his wedding to Julie, Kafka called off the ceremony due to apartment problems. The couple continued seeing each other, even after the breaking off of their engagement in July 1920. Again then,

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[20] Koch p.23.

[21] Koch p.21.

[22] Kafka, Tagebücher p.539.

the relationship lingered on at length through unhappiness and uncertainty.

One month before calling off his wedding, Kafka received his first letter from Milena Jesenka-Polak who was to become his next mistress. Whilst still engaged to Julie, he spent four days with Milena in Vienna. Now, with Milena, the established pattern repeated itself yet again. The married Milena was obviously a dynamic woman, very different from Kafka's two previous fiancées. The outcome, however, was very similar, which shows that it was Kafka's attitude to women that dictated the lack of success he had, rather than the women themselves. The affair was again largely epistolary, this time, however, Milena did not present the threat of marriage (she was already married), but the threat of sexuality. Milena wrote of this problem to Brod:

> Diese Angst bezieht sich nicht nur auf mich, sondern auf alles, was schamlos lebt, auch beispielsweise auf das Fleisch.[23]

Again, this time in the vibrant Milena, the now seriously ill Kafka was offered the choice between life and literature. This time it was Kafka that made the choice. In November, 1920, Kafka wrote to Milena that their correspondence should stop. Heartbroken, Milena expressed an insight into Kafka which has eluded so many critics. To Brod she wrote,

> [...] irgendwo <u>ist</u> Schuld [...]. Ich will wissen, ob es mit mir so steht, daß auch unter mir Frank leidet und gelitten hat wie unter jeder andern Frau, so daß seine Krankheit ärger

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[23] Franz Kafka, <u>Briefe and Milena</u>, ed. Jürgen Born and Michael Müller (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), p.370.

> wurde, so daß er auch vor mir in seine Angst fliehen mußte und so daß auch ich jetzt verschwinden muß, ob ich schuld daran bin oder ob es eine Konsequenz seines eigenen Wesens ist.[24]

Surely the "fault", if that is the right word, must have rested with Kafka. Why else should three relationships with three very different women all be so similar and all end unhappily?

Kafka met the only woman who really seemed to make him happy eleven months before his death. Dora Dymant was not interested in Kafka the writer, she loved Kafka the sick and sensitive man. It would be undiplomatic, but perhaps nevertheless true to say that had Kafka met Dora at a different stage in his life the relationship would again have been unsuccessful. Kafka did not have to make this relationship fail, as he knew he was dying. One can only speculate. The truth remains, however, that the dying Kafka and the young Dora worshipped each other. Glatzer describes Dora as,

> [...] the most sincere among those assembled at the funeral, [she] represented the warm, simple, caring, loving human being, the one Kafka felt closest to, one to which he could relate without at the same time feeling the tragic opposite, the dreadful paradox of life.[25]

Kafka had maintained as early as 1911 that poor health would prevent him from becoming happily married and having children.[26] Again, he had proved himself right.

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[24] Kafka, Briefe an Milena p.368.

[25] Nahum Glatzer, The Loves of Franz Kafka (New York: Schocken, 1986), pp.75-76.

[26] Kafka, Tagebücher p.198.

When one tries to gain an overview of Kafka's relationships with women, one sees nothing but failure: failure constantly predicted by Kafka himself. If there really was "[...] nothing Kafka wanted more than to marry and have a family,"[27] then why didn't he achieve it? Nowhere does Kafka display a positive attitude towards his romantic association with women. When Kafka considered why he should or should not marry[28], he did not consider this in relationship to Felice, his girlfriend at the time, but rather, in relationship to women in general. Later in 1921, Kafka was still displaying this generalising attitude and continuing to predict his own unhappiness:

> Ich beneide nicht das einzelne Ehepaar, ich beneide nur alle Ehepaare, - auch wenn ich nur ein Ehepaar beneide, beneide ich eigentlich das ganze Eheglück in seiner unendlichen Vielgestalt, im Glück einer einzigen Ehe würde ich selbst im günstigen Fall wahrscheinlich verzweifeln.[29]

Kafka did not think of his relationship with Felice as failing, or that with Milena, instead it was his relationship with <u>women</u>. He saw himself shut out from this happiness which was granted others, and there is much truth in de Beauvoir's comment that,

> A woman could never have become Kafka: in her doubts and her anxieties she would never have recognised the anguish of Man driven from paradise.[30]

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[27] Ronald Hayman, <u>K. A Biography of Kafka</u> (London: Weidenfeld, 1981), p.121.

[28] Kafka, <u>Tagebücher</u> p.310.

[29] Kafka, <u>Tagebücher</u> p.544.

[30] Simone de Beauvoir, <u>The Second Sex</u> (New York: Bantam, 1970), p.672.

Kafka saw the situation as being him, the solitary male, against womanhood. It is this womanhood that appears in his literature. His fictional women could be no more specific than his factual ones. As Vortriede writes,

> Kafka the non-lover is Kafka the writer; the non-lover informs his work which is the continuous and misleading justification of his lack of love.[31]

Both Kafka's life and his literature revolved around the principle of his inadequacy and failure. Each step provided him with further proof that his diagnosis was correct: love, which meant so much to him,[32] was unattainable. Kafka placed himself and his heroes in situations where happiness became beyond reach and one could only succeed in reasserting one's failure. Only in this state could Kafka carry on. He could only write if he first had to struggle through internal anguish. When Brod wrote to Kafka, "Du bist in Deinem Unglück glücklich,"[33] he accurately summarised the self-imposed failure of Kafka and the subsequent despair reflected in his protagonists and their relationships with women.

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[31] Werner Vortriede, "Letters to Milena: The Writer as Advocate of Himself," Franz Kafka Today, ed. Angel Flores and Homer Swander (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), p.243.

[32] see Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981), p.197.

[33] Excerpt from a letter from Brod, quoted by Kafka in a letter to Felice. Franz Kafka, Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit, ed. Jürgen Born and Erich Heller (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983) p.757.

7. The Biographical Approach: An Overview

The biographical approach has been widely used by critics working on Kafka's texts. Kafka's work lends itself easily to this approach, as there is an abundance of letters and diary entries available to increase our knowledge of Kafka's life. These documents make compelling reading, as they trace fourteen years of unhappiness and anguish to which the reader feels inextricably drawn despite occasional pangs of conscience. Some critics, however, denounce this approach altogether, preferring to work solely with the text. Both these critics and those using the diaries and letters as evidence, work with one major assumption: that Kafka's novels and short stories are fictional whilst the diaries and letters are factual. In this chapter, the diaries and letters will be considered in detail to see whether, or to what extent, they can be regarded as factual and used to clarify Kafka's literature.

7.1. The Diaries

When one considers that Kafka deals extensively with himself in his works and that we also have access to his diaries, it would make little sense not to use them. The problem, however, lies in <u>how</u> one uses them.

Kafka's diaries are not ordinary diaries. There are hardly any of the factual elements that one would expect to find in a diary. One could be excused for forgetting that the First World War took place during the period covered by the diaries, for example, as no comment is made of it. Instead the diaries are of a more literary

nature. Short scenes are tried out for use later in his short stories, along with Kafka's reflections on situations, dreams, and so on. Often it is extremely difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. For July, 1913, for example, we find the following entry,

> Ich pflegte während meiner Gymnasialzeit hie und da einen gewissen Josef Mack, einen Freund meines verstorbenen Vaters zu besuchen. Als ich nach Absolvierung des Gymnasiums- ...[bricht ab][1]

As there is also a character called Mack in Der Verschollene, we then assume he was based on Kafka's deceased father's friend. But herein lies the problem: Kafka's father outlived him by seven years. The diary entry is fictional. At least here the comment about the deceased father exposes the truth. It is impossible to know, however, how many other entries of this kind we take to be factual, when they are actually based entirely in Kafka's imagination.

Other entries can be found, however, where the reverse is true. For example, for 19th May, 1922, we find,

> Zu zweit fühlt er sich verlassener als allein. Ist er mit jemandem zu zweit, greift dieser zweite nach ihm und er ist ihm hilflos ausgeliefert. Ist er allein, greift zwar die ganze Menschheit nach ihm, aber die unzähligen ausgestreckten Arme verfangen sich ineinander und niemand erreicht ihn.[2]

Here, we have what Freedman refers to as "[...] diary entries disguised as fiction [...]."[3] At first, mainly due to the use of the

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[1] Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.313.

[2] Kafka, Tagebücher p.581.

[3] Ralph Freedman, "Franz Kafka; The Revival of Biography in Modern Literature," Newsletter of the Kafka Society of America (June: 1983), p.26.

third person, we assume that this is another one of the "literary sketches" which occur so frequently throughout the diaries. When one examines the content, however, it seems more likely that this section is indeed autobiographical, unlike the previous entry cited, which was in the first person and fictional. For this reason, using the diaries as a factual source of reference is a very delicate matter.

Kafka used his diaries in many ways. They were used to some degree as a form of literary sketch book, full of ideas to which he could go back later. There are extensive descriptions of people, for example, as the following entry illustrates:

> Fräulein K. Verlockungen, mit denen das Wesen nicht mitgeht. Das Auf und Zu das Dehnen, Spitzen, Aufblühn der Lippen, als modellierten dort unsichtbar die Finger. Die plötzlich wohl nervöse, aber diszipliniert angewandte, immer überraschende Bewegung, zum Beispiel Ordnen des Rockes auf den Knien, Änderung des Sitzes. Die Konversation mit wenig Worten, wenig Gedanken, ohne jede Unterstützung durch die andern, in der Hauptsache durch Kopfwendungen, Händespiel, verschiedenartige Pausen, Lebendigkeit des Blicks, im Notfall durch Ballen der kleinen Fäuste erzeugt.[4]

These passages seem to be almost like photographs which the artist can refer back to later for reference. Or again, they may be entirely imaginary and are forms of literary exercises which Kafka set himself. One can never really be sure what one is dealing with.

For reasons which are unknown to us, Max Brod took out most of the obviously fictional passages from the diaries before their publication. This may have been due to the fact that Brod realised that they could be published separately. It does, however, greatly

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[4] Kafka, Tagebücher p.519.

alter the tone of the diaries from their original form, as Graser observes:

> [...] das Fehlen dieser Teilstücke verändert den Gesamtcharakter des Tagebuchs einschneidend und muß jede Werkbetrachtung empfindlich stören. Vor allem wird dadurch der betont dichterische Tenor der Tagebuchaufzeichnungen für den Betrachter verwischt, ganz zu schweigen von dem Bruch des innigen Zusammenhangs und Wechselverhältnis von Tagebuch und Werk.[5]

As some fictional passages have been left in,however, as is the case with an entry for August, 1913, which is a dialogue between Leopold S. and Felice S.[6], the literary tone of the diaries is not completely lost, and one remains aware of the very close artistic link between the diaries and Kafka's works. Indeed, this is true to such an extent that the diaries are almost works of art like the novels which, as we have seen, are perhaps more biographical than some diary entries. Graser writes, "[...] man könnte auch hier das Gesamtwerk als eine Art verstecktes Tagebuch auffassen."[7] Kafka exposes himself through his art and this is equally as obvious in the novels as in the diaries.

The majority of entries seem to be an attempt made by Kafka to understand himself by formalising his actions and concretising his motivation. By doing this, Kafka gave himself something solid to

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[5] Albert Graser, "Das literarische Tagebuch: Studien über Elemente des Tagebuches als Kunstform," diss., University of Saarbrücken, 1955, p.63.

[6] Kafka, Tagebücher p.317.

[7] Graser p.67.

cling to, and the diaries became an anchor of existence. Kafka wrote,

> Ein Vorteil des Tagebuchführens besteht darin, daß man sich mit beruhigender Klarheit der Wandlungen bewußt wird, denen man unaufhörlich unterliegt [...].[8]

Not only did writing help Kafka achieve this stability, but so did the subsequent reading of past entries. On 19th November, 1913, Kafka notes that,

> Mich ergreift das Lesen des Tagebuches. Ist der Grund dessen, daß ich in der Gegenwart jetzt nicht die geringste Sicherheit mehr habe? Alles erscheint mir als Konstruktion.[9]

Thus looking back everything can be systemised and considered more carefully. When one considers, however, that the majority of these entries were fictional rather than factual, one realises that only a sense of mood could be established rather than a detailed understanding of the progression of events. This mood is essentially melancholy, although Binder comments, "beyond a doubt he [Kafka] was not in his personal relations the gloomy misanthrope one might expect from reading his diaries."[10] Why, then, did Kafka reserve his gloom for the diaries? To understand this one must appreciate when and why Kafka chose to write them.

As has been mentioned above, Kafka's diaries are not what one would usually expect. Most diaries are very private, to be read only

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[8] Kafka, Tagebücher p.202.

[9] Kafka, Tagebücher p.329.

[10] Hartmut Binder, "The Letters: Form and Context," The Kafka Debate: New Perspectives for our Time, ed. Angel Flores (New York: Gordian, 1977), p.223.

by oneself, if at all. This was not the case for Kafka. On 3rd January, 1912, Kafka wrote, "Ich hatte mir vorgenommen, nachmittag Max aus den Tagebüchern vorzulesen [...]."[11] Thus we can see that his diaries were not entirely private. It is possible, of course, that he only intended to read from the purely fictional parts and not from the more personal sections. By 1921, however, this definitely was not the case. It was at this time that we find the entry, "Alle Tagebücher, vor einer Woche etwa, M[ilena] gegeben. Ein wenig freier? Nein."[12] This indicates several things. Firstly, Kafka obviously wanted Milena to read everything, even the more private sections. This may have been for personal reasons, so that Milena could get to know him better. Milena, however, was also responsible for translating Kafka's work into Czech - that is, to increase the readership and make his work more public. This is not the only action undertaken by Kafka which seems to indicate that he wanted the diaries to be published despite his comments to the contrary. For example, Kafka did destroy some parts of the diary. In so doing, he was obviously acknowledging that he thought they would be read at some stage. If he had not thought this, then there would have been no need to destroy them. More important, however, is the fact that, had Kafka not intended us to read the diaries at all, then he could have destroyed <u>all</u> of them. If he had not wanted to do this himself, or if he was too ill to do this, then he could have asked Dora to carry out this wish for him. Dora burnt all of the manuscripts that

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[11] Kafka, <u>Tagebücher</u> p.228.

[12] Kafka, <u>Tagebücher</u> p.542.

Kafka asked her to. He must have known that she would have burnt the diaries too. That he never asked that she do this seems to indicate that he never actually intended that they be burnt. Instead he asked Brod to burn them, thus ensuring that they would not be destroyed. Vortriede writes that,

> [...] it becomes quite apparent that when Max Brod published Kafka's manuscripts against his friend's explicit wish he did precisely what Kafka the writer wanted him to do. As his own lawyer Kafka had declared himself a non-writer. With this provision he has assured his acquittal even beyond the grave.[13]

If Kafka intended that his diaries should be read, then it shows that he was knowingly writing a public work. It was written, like the novels and short stories, with an audience in mind. For this reason they are very important, but must be handled with care. They are not the factual basis from which Kafka's art grew, instead they are another facet of his art. They can help us understand moods and attitudes but not specific details, as one can never be sure of their authenticity or understand to what degree they have been painted with the colours of artistic license. Kafka's diaries give us the broad strokes, but they must always be considered as an extension of his art, and not as reference books.

7.2. The Letters

Like the diaries, Kafka's letters to both Felice and Milena also have great artistic value. Unlike Kafka's letters to his friend

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[13] Werner Vortriede, "Letters to Milena: The Writer as Advocate of Himself," Franz Kafka Today, ed. Angel Flores and Homer Swander (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), p.248.

Brod, which are far more factual, these letters again seem to be intended for an audience. In no way are they ordinary love letters.

Born informs us that during the five years of their relationship Kafka sent Felice over three hundred and fifty letters and one hundred and forty six postcards. More amazingly, over half of these were sent during the first six months![14] Felice, although not quite as prolific, nevertheless kept pace. Despite this we still find numerous letters and diary entries from Kafka echoing the following sentiment, "Heute war aber wirklich schon höchste Zeit, daß der Brief kam."[15] Kafka simply could not receive enough letters. At first, this would seem to be a sign of Kafka's ardent love for Felice. When one looks at the actual letters, however, one soon sees that this is not the case. Pawel writes, "Die Briefe haben mit gewöhnlichen Liebesbriefen so wenig zu tun wie Kafka mit einem gewöhnlichen Liebhaber."[16] Nowhere does Kafka actually tell Felice that he loves her, or that he misses her or how beautiful she is, or any of the usual things one would expect to find in a love letter. Instead he writes of why they cannot be happy, or health problems and the like. The letters centre around Kafka far more than around the person to whom they were sent. Through this, one senses the same atmosphere as

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[14] Jürgen Born, "Vom Urteil zum Prozeß. Zu Kafkas Leben und Schaffen in den Jahren 1912-1914," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, 86 (1967), p.178.

[15] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), p.101.

[16] Ernst Pawel, Das Leben Franz Kafkas (München: Hanser, 1986), p.301.

in the diaries: an atmosphere of self-examination. On 24th November, 1912, Kafka wrote, "[...] je mehr ich schreibe und je mehr ich mich befreie, desto reiner und würdiger werde ich vielleicht für Dich [...]."[17] One can see that Kafka did not only mean the writing of obvious works of literature, but also the writing of letters and diaries. Kafka's letters to Felice, when looked at in detail actually carry very little documentary value in a literal sense. Instead, one can detect Kafka's battle with himself and his struggle to come to terms with his need to both write and to have female companionship, the two things which he felt to be mutually exclusive. Reading the letters is moving, not because one feels one is prying, but because one can sense the oncoming failure and pain. Politzer writes,

> Die groteske Tragik dieser Liebesbriefe liegt in ihrem eigenen Wesen, das heißt im Wesen ihres Schreibers, begründet. Sie stellen den im Menschlichen wie Literarischen wohl einmaligen Versuch eines Mannes dar, sich einer Frau durch Worte, nichts als Worte, und noch dazu vorwiegend durch Worte der Negation zu bemächtigen.[18]

For this reason the letters are important, as they give us insight into their author rather than insight into Felice. We can see how these letters, like his other works, show the battles within Kafka, battles which are continued in Der Prozeß and Das Schloß, for example. Kafka's letters to Felice are almost letters to himself, or

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[17] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.117.

[18] Heinz Politzer, Hatte Ödipus einen Ödipus-Komplex? (München: Piper, 1974), p.61.

at best, letters to a woman, as there are very few specific details which distinguish Felice from any other woman.

This is also true, although to a lesser degree, of Kafka's letters to Milena. Again one finds long passages of self-analysis, where Milena's own identity and personality become irrelevant. Here, as before, one senses an atmosphere of self-destruction as in Der Prozeß or Das Schloß. The reader of the letters, like the reader of the novels, gets the feeling that, were he in the leading role, then he could do better. Kafka's letters to Milena possess a sadness and love deeper than in those to Felice of which they seem to be an intensified version. They form a last desperate attempt to capture a woman who one knows cannot be caught. Again, these are not ordinary love letters any more than the diaries are ordinary diaries. Often one feels that Kafka could be writing to any woman. His comment to Milena that "[...] ich [war] fast 3 Tage und schlimme Tage ohne Nachricht, ohne die Telegrammantwort [mußte ich] fast glauben [...] daß Du krank seist,"[19] reminds us of his similar concern with Felice's "lack" of letters.[20] In addition, one finds some remarks which are almost identical, such as "Du nun gehörst zu mir"[21] to Felice and "Du gehörst zu mir"[22] to Milena. These remarks emphasise Kafka's attempts to escape isolation and also demonstrate that in his

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[19] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Milena, ed. Jürgen Born and Michael Müller (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), p.112.

[20] see footnote #15.

[21] Kafka, Briefe an Felice p.730.

[22] Kafka, Briefe an Milena p.57.

letters he was concentrating on himself rather than on the recipient which explains the lack of individuality.

It would be inaccurate, however, to regard the letters to the two women as being totally lacking in any distinguishing features. As an example of this one need only consider Kafka's letter to Milena of 15th July, 1920, when he wrote, "Was für ein leichtes Leben wird es sein, wenn wir beisammen sind."[23] Kafka could never have written such a letter to Felice, because it would have tipped the balance between the negative and positive aspects that Kafka keeps so well in the letters. With Felice, the situation could easily have occurred, where they were living together, whereas the circumstances with Milena made this impossible, as she refused to leave her husband. Thus Kafka's positive comment keeps the balance with the negative situation, and a status quo was maintained.

This balance and dichotomy illustrate the extent to which these letters must be considered as an extension of Kafka's art rather than simply as letters. Buber-Neumann comments quite accurately that the letters "[...] werfen [...] doch ein besonders aufschlußreiches Licht auf den Charakter des Dichters."[24] It is this light that is useful when considering Kafka's other works, rather than any specific detail the letters might offer us.

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[23] Kafka, Briefe an Milena p.119.

[24] Margarethe Buber-Neumann, "Milena Jesenka, die Freundin Kafkas im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück," Deutsche Rundschau, 8 (1954), p.774.

7.3. Summary

When one considers the extent to which Kafka's works deal with aspects of himself, then it is obvious that his diaries and letters must also be of use to us. However, one must always keep the fictional aspects of these works in mind. Neither the letters nor the diaries can be used in a factual manner to unravel mysteries as to who or what was meant in the works. It is as unreasonable to assume that the "real Felice" can be found in the diaries as it is to assume that she can be found in Das Schloß. As Emrich points out,

> Wäre, wie viele Deuter annehmen, Kafkas Dichtung Spiegelbild, Ausdruck, oder Symbol und Allegorie für bestimmte religiöse Vorstellungen und Glaubensinhalte oder für bestimmte soziale und biographische Phänomene [...], so wäre nicht einzusehen, warum Kafka überhaupt seine Dichtungen so verrätselt hat.[25]

One can look at the manuscripts and find how Kafka felt towards women, marriage or sex, for example, without subsequently regarding the novels as a form of "verschlüsselte Autobiographie"[26] and nothing more. Everything in the diaries, letters and literary works was formed by being passed through an "artistic filter": namely Kafka himself. This means that the diaries and letters cannot be seen as finite answers but as stepping stones on the way to a greater understanding of Kafka's work. The involvement of women in Kafka's life and works is far more complex than Kafka simply reporting episodes, and we must never let our guard down and unquestionably accept something which Kafka has written at face value. Life and art

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[25] Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958), pp.22/23.

[26] Rudolf Hartung, "Ein neues Kafkabild: Anmerkungen zu Canettis Essay 'Der andere Prozeß'," Text + Kritik, 28 (1970), p.48.

are not exact copies of one another and nor can one say that the diaries belong to life and the novels to art. Kafka himself wrote,

> Ich schreibe anders als ich rede, ich rede anders als ich denke, ich denke anders als ich denken soll und so geht es weiter bis ins tiefste Dunkel.[27]

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[27] Franz Kafka, Briefe an Ottla und die Familie, ed. Hartmut Binder and Klaus Wagenbach (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981), p.21.

8. Conclusion

After looking at Kafka's short stories, novels, diaries and letters, one is forced to conclude that these genres flow over into each other. One can find autobiographical aspects in the short stories and novels just as one can find literary elements in the diaries and letters. Born goes so far as to maintain,

> [...] es gibt wohl auch kaum einen zweiten [Autor], bei dem Leben und Werk so stark einander durchdrangen, der so sehr aus seinem Schreiben heraus und für sein Schreiben lebte.[1]

Where one expects to find fact in Kafka's writing, one finds fiction, and where one expects fiction, one can detect fact. These facts centre around Kafka's personality more than anything else. Georg, Gregor, the country doctor, Karl, Josef K. and K. all contain elements of self-examination on the part of Kafka. That Kafka instructed Dora to burn some of his manuscripts "[...] in order to free his soul from these 'ghosts'," [2] illustrates the close connection Kafka felt between himself and his art.

It has been shown in the previous chapter to what extent Kafka established his existence through writing. Long passages of self-analysis, not necessarily in the first person, enabled Kafka to grasp his existence, often then going on to turn the imagined situations into reality. Binder writes about Kafka that,

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[1] Jürgen Born, "Vom Urteil zum Prozeß: Zu Kafkas Leben und Schaffen in den Jahren 1912-1914," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie 86 (1967), p.186.

[2] Ronald Hayman, K.: A Biography of Kafka (London: Weidenfeld, 1981), p.296.

> He was [...] driven to rhetorical figures of similarity and antithesis because he could think only in these terms. Rhetorical figures provided him with a loose and flexible syntactic framework that gave maximum rein to the essentially irrational workings of his mind. They enabled him to verbalise his mental operations without ever freezing fluid processes into solid conclusions.[3]

This thesis has demonstrated that nowhere is this more obvious than in the diaries. Here reality and literature, two irreconcilable factors for Kafka, were merged into one. Literature became the reality rather than simply attempting to mirror it, and as Hayman puts it, Kafka "[...] was the self who could stay in bed while the fiction went out into the world."[4] All boundaries between fact and fiction became blurred. In the short stories and novels one expects and anticipates this: in the diaries and letters one is ill prepared. "[...] dieses Tagebuchführen einer Nation, das etwas ganz anderes ist als Geschichtsschreibung [...],"[5] wrote Kafka on 25th December, 1911, himself drawing attention to the more internal and non-factual element of diaries in general, but more especially of his own. Nothing in Kafka's writing can therefore be assumed to be true. Kafka actively misleads and confuses his readers. K., for example, is not a Land Surveyor. Vortriede sums up the situation quite clearly when he states that "every sentence by Kafka has the appendix, not always expressed; 'but you must not forget, Kafka is a

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[3] Hartmut Binder, "The Letters: Form and Context," The Kafka Debate: New Perspectives for our Time, ed. Angel Flores (New York: Gordian, 1977), p.239.

[4] Hayman p.252.

[5] Franz Kafka, Tagebücher 1910-1923 (New York: Schocken, 1949), p.206.

liar'."[6] It is, however, even more problematic than this, as one cannot assume that Kafka is always a liar. For these reasons any biographical approach which makes extensive use of Kafka's diaries and letters places itself in a precarious situation. Freedman writes that "[...] relations between the structures of life and the structures of art require careful synchronization."[7] In Kafka's case, however, we have no way of distinguishing between the "structures of life and the structures of art," and this becomes particularly obvious when one deals with the women in Kafka's life and those in his novels and short stories.

We have no reason to believe that the Felice and Milena with whom Kafka corresponded and about whom he wrote in his diaries, are accurate copies of the real women. We have many reasons to believe, however, that these women became a means for Kafka to prove his belief that he could not succeed with women. Koch writes that "Kafka invented her [Felice], [...] and rejected her just as surely as Flaubert invented and rejected Louise Colet."[8] Kafka himself gives us good reason to belief that Felice, for example, was not important to him as an individual. When contemplating suicide, Kafka wrote, "F[elice] ist zufällig die, an der sich meine Bestimmung erweist

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[6] Werner Vortriede, "Letters to Milena: The Writer as Advocate of Himself," Franz Kafka Today, ed. Angel Flores and Homer Swander (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1958), p.243.

[7] Ralph Freedman, "Franz Kafka; The Revival of Biography in Modern Literature," Newsletter of the Kafka Society of America (June: 1983), p.28.

[8] Stephen Koch, "The Secret Kafka," New Criterion (Jan: 1984), p.22.

[...]."[9] The individualising characteristics of a woman were unimportant to Kafka. Felice was important to him to the extent that she proved him incapable of happiness. Politzer writes,

> So diente ihm Felice als die unerreichbare und eben darum unschätzbare Empfängerin, die seiner ungebundenen, keiner Bindung fähigen Libido immerhin eine Richtung wies.[10]

Politzer could, however, have gone further. This was not only Felice's role but the role of every woman who came after her, with the possible exception of Dora Dymant.

If the individualising characteristics of these women were lost on Kafka, as has been demonstrated, then it is senseless for the critic to attempt to equate individual women from Kafka's life with specific characters from his works. This is true for two main reasons. Firstly, Kafka himself did not distinguish between particular women, as we have seen. At best, these women represented womanhood. Secondly, we have also discovered that a biographical approach which assumes that the diaries and letters are factual is also extremely problematic, as these seem instead to be extensions of his art and must, therefore, also be regarded as literary texts. Stach writes,

> Der literarische Text ist, wie jedes Kunstwerk, ein Gebilde von zweideutiger Beschaffenheit: Hervorgegangen aus einer Verschränkung von sozialen, kulturellen und psychischen Prozessen, schließt es sich ab gegen seine Genese, wird

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[9] Kafka, Tagebücher p.360.

[10] Heinz Politzer, Hatte Ödipus einen Ödipus-Komplex? (München: Piper, 1974), p.60.

> autonom, realisiert im Reich der Zeichen eigene Strukturen und Gesetzmäßigkeiten.[11]

In conclusion, one can say that Kafka did indeed take his female characters from his own experience. In this case, however, not only were these characters then altered during the artistic process, but they had already been taken in as "non-specific" characters by Kafka. Thus to equate specific characters from the novels with either Felice or Milena, for example, is unfounded, both because Kafka does not allow us to get to know these women as individuals in his diaries and letters and because it would be denying Kafka's artistic talent to create something new. What is vital in Kafka's literature is, as Emrich explains,

> [...] daß Kafka - vielleicht als einziger moderner Dichter - kompromißlos den Gedankenkreis seiner Zeit durchbrach, zur Gestaltung eines universellen wahren Allgemeinen vordrang und damit die Höhe klassischer Dichtung erreichte.[12]

Kafka's aim was not to photograph life but rather to make us <u>feel</u> modern man's predicament. Kafka's women, in his life and in his art, are womanhood, and it is here that life and literature combine to allow only the most general biographical approach.

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[11] Reiner Stach, <u>Kafkas erotischer Mythos: Eine ästhetische Konstruktion des Weiblichen</u> (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1987), p.43.

[12] Wilhelm Emrich, <u>Franz Kafka</u> (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958), p.22.

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